

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY
CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL
LIBRARY

CLASS _____

CALL No. 954.11 Neo

D.G.A. 79.

Supplied by
Poona Oriental Book House
330A, SADASHIV,
POONA 2 (India)



INTRODUCTION TO ASSAM

1957



INTRODUCTION

TO

ASSAM

34806

By

DIMBESWAR NEOG, M. A., B. Sc., B. T.

Author of a peep into the 'History of Assamese Literature from the Earliest-Times'; 'An Exhaustive History of Assamese Literature'; 'Studies in Assamese Literature Ancient and Modern'; 'Origin of Vaishnavism in Assam' etc., etc.

954.11
Neog



VORA & CO. PUBLISHERS LIMITED
ROUND BUILDING, BOMBAY 2.

First Edition
December 1947.

CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL
LIBRARY, NEW DELHI.

Acc. No. *34806*
Date.....*13-10-1958*
Call No.....*954.11*

Neo

CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL
LIBRARY, NEW DELHI.

Acc. No. *419*
Date.....*18.8.51*
Call No.....*934.76 / Neo*

Price Rs 9/8.

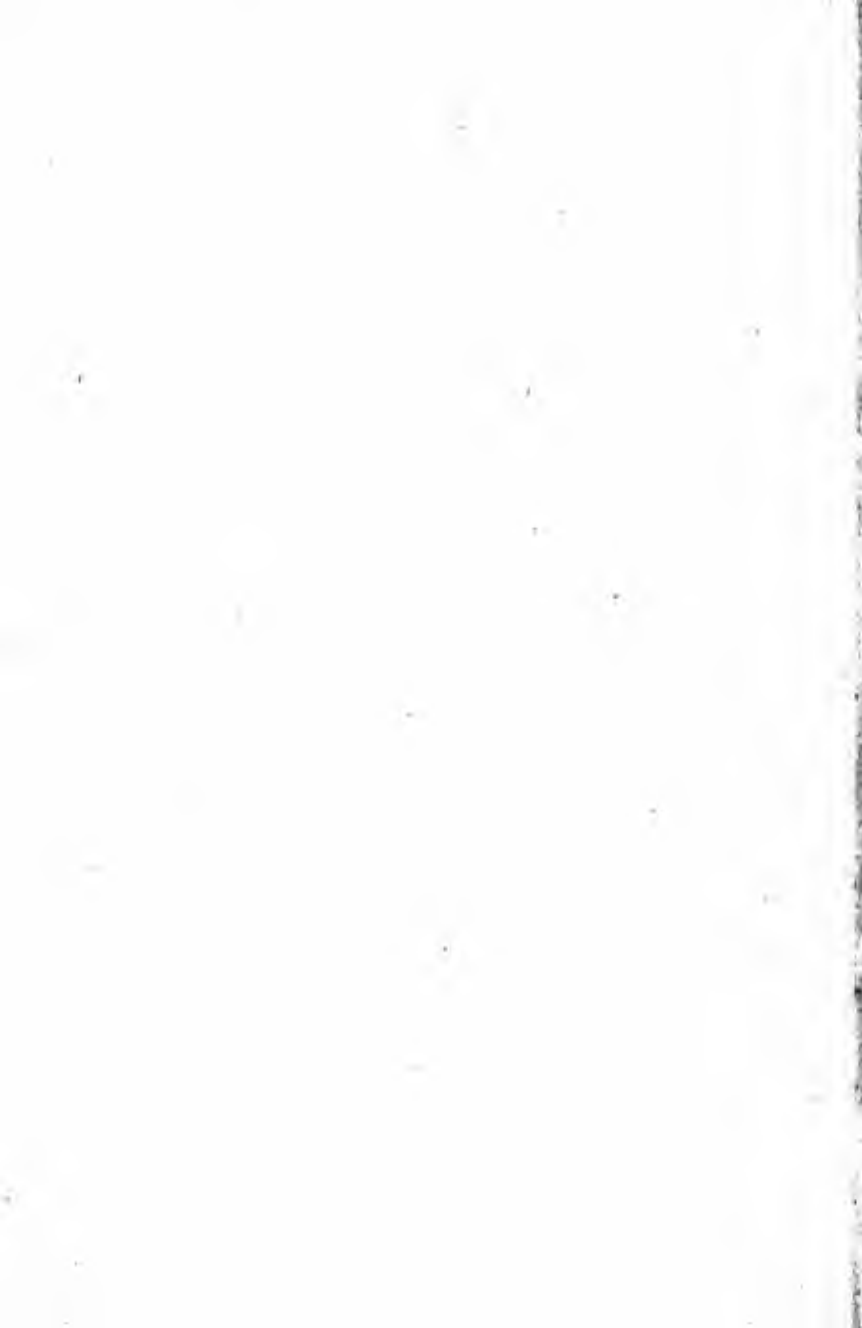
PREFACE

Sjt. Neog in this book has not merely introduced Assam to the reading public but has undertaken herculean labour and immense pains to impress on them the details of every phase of the activities of the people of Assam from the pre-historic times to the modern days. In the treatment of the subject he has displayed mastery of facts, mature judgment in describing the trends of events of the times, and above all scholarship of considerable merit. He has attempted to compress into paragraphs what in my opinion would have taken a chapter and a chapter into what should have been a complete part of the book. The readers have to feel a little weary in passing through these parts of the book. But on the whole the book should prove highly useful and I hope interesting to scholars and laymen who would like to obtain comprehensive idea about the past, medieval and modern times of Assam.

I commend the book to the reading public.

Gopinath Bardoloi,

Premier, Assam.



FOREWORD

History of Assam is still at best a half-told tale. Even today it is perhaps the single instance of a province least known and most misunderstood in India itself. "In the histories of India as a whole", to quote Sir Edward Gait, "Assam is barely mentioned, and only ten lines are devoted to its annals in the historical portion of Hunter's 'Indian Empire'!"

But, those who know have been compelled to admit that "Assam is in many ways a country of exceptional interest". Thus when the full text of her political, social and cultural history comes to be recorded, we may be sure her ancient glories will awaken the admiration, her heroic adventures fire the imagination and her present struggles enlist the sympathy not only of India but of the world outside.

I am not vain enough to entertain any extravagant hope that the following pages may approach anything like this. As a matter of fact, these few lines have been penned as a preamble to my work "History of Assamese Literature" where I have made an humble attempt to present one or two aspects of Assamese culture. This I have deemed necessary to clear my perspective as regards the jurisdiction and scope of Assamese language and literature so often confused. A rapid survey as it is, I believe it may

help my readers a good deal to have a clearer view of the true history of the country and a better understanding of her aspirations.

I offer my heartfelt thanks to those who in any way helped or encouraged me in this endeavour but have not been mentioned anywhere in this book. I must in this connexion refer to my esteemed friend Sri M. K. Vora whose ardent devotion to Indian culture in general and silent appreciation of the growing importance of the modern province of Assam in particular have crystalised into the publication of this work.

The Beauty Cot,
Jorhat, Assam
September 1, 1947.

DIMBESWAR NEOG

To

KAKASAHIB KALELKAR

A towering personality and an eminent scholar,
as a small token of regard and gratitude for the kind
encouragement received in the execution of this work.

*"The future waits for us to create it out of the
materials left to us by the past—aided by our own
understanding of their own inheritance."*

CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---------------------|---------|
| Foreword | 5 |
| The Country | 9 |
| The People | 149 |
| The Speech | 186-226 |

THE COUNTRY

The name Assam, as the Youngest Province of British India, is of Quite Recent Origin.

Assam is the north-eastern most province of India. But neither the present territorial distribution nor the recent name given to it goes much beyond a century. It now embraces half a dozen districts of the Brahmaputra valley Division and another half a dozen districts of Surma valley and Hill Districts Division. By the latest available records (the Census of 1941 being treated till now as confidential) the province has an area of 67,334 sq. miles with a population of 92,47,857 persons. The Brahmaputra valley by itself covers an area of 27,804 sq. miles with 48,55,711 inhabitants (Census of India, 1931, Vol. 111, Assam, part 1, p. 6, Report by C. S. Mullan, I.C.S.). The Imperial Gazetteer of India ('Eastern Bengal and Assam') attempts to give an idea of 'origin of name' (p. 16) and 'history' (pp. 26-41) and Mr. Michell in his Report on the North East Frontier of India shows its topographical (Ch. 1, 'Ancient names of rivers and places in Upper Assam,' pp. 1-4) and political (Ch. 11 'Assam in the middle of the seventh century,' pp. 29-37) aspects. Further and more detailed accounts on the administrative side has been given by Mr. A. J. Moffatt in The Report on the Province of Assam, 1853.

The Country Was Renowned as Pragjyotisha Even From the Days of the Ramayana (cir. 600 B.C.)

Undoubtedly this was the country renowned as Pragjyotisha in the days of the Epics and as Kamarupa in the Puranic times. Both the epics the Ramayana and the Mahabharata have constant and distinct re-

Introduction To Assam

ferences to this country. The Ramayana (Kishkindhya Cando, Ch. XLII) refers to this place as being located in the Vrunalaya in connection with the search for Sita. :—

*Yojanani chatuhshasthir Varaho nama parvatah:
Suvarnasringah sumahan agadhe Varunalaye. 30.
Tatra Pragjyotisham nama jatarupamayam*

*puram :
Tasmin vasati dushtatma Narako nama danavah. 31.*

*Tatra sanushu ranyeshu visalasu guhasu cha :
Ravanah saha Vaidehya marjitavya statastatah. 32.*

The Ramayana (Bengal Edition, Adi cando, Ch. XXXXGI) mentions that the city of Pragjyotisha was established by Amurtaraya Dharmaranya :—

*Tathamurtaraya dhiraschakre Pragjyotisham
puram :
Dharmaranyasamipasya vasuschakre giri vrajam.*

The Bombay Edition (Ramayana, Adi Cando, Ch. XXXII, 7) refers to this founder as Amurtaraja :—

*Amurtarajaso nama Dharmaranyam mahamatih:
Chakre puravaram raja vasurnama girivrajam.*

The king of Pragjyotisha is said to have been invited to and held in high honour in the jajas made by Raghu, the solar king and the great-grand-father of Ramachandra of Oudh (Rai Bahadur Gunabhiram Baruwa's Saumar Bhraman in Jonaki).

The Mahabharata has even more regular and constant references to Pragajyotisha especially in connection with its king Bhagadatta, who succeeded his father, the great Naraka (in Adi, Sabha, Udyoga,

Introduction To Assam

Pragjyotisha Embraced a Portion of China, as Far as Tibet.

In the Sabha Parva (Mahabharata), Arjuna, in connexion with his conquests on the north, is mentioned as encountering with Bhagadatta. The Aswamedha Parva (chs. LXIV-LXXV) also describes the sacrificial horse of the Pandavas entering Pragjyotisha just on crossing Trigartta (Jalandhara). King Raghu, the great-grand-father of Rama of Oudh, in course of his march for universal conquest while going to the north is described as invading Pragjyotisha just after conquering the Himalayan territories (Raghuvamsa, ch. IV). The Sabha Parva (ch. XXVI 9) further relates about Bhagadatta.—“Sa Kirataischa Chinaischa vritah Pragjyotishobhavat”. All these statements make the conclusion irresistible that Pragjyotisha must have embraced at least a portion of China as far as Tibet to its immediate north, or else how could Bhagadatta procure his Chinese soldiers? (The Preface, Kamrup Rajavali, in Kamrup Sasana-vall by late Mahamahopadhyaya Padmanath Bhattacharya M.A., Vidyavenode).

The Sabha Parva (ch. XXX) further relates how Bhima came to the land of the Lauhitya (Brahmaputra) in course of his triumphant march to the east from Indraprastha (modern Delhi):—

*Evam vahuvidhan des an vijitya pavanatmajah
Vasu tebhya upadaya Lauhityamagamdulee.
Sa sarvan mlechhahripatin sagaramupavasnah
Karamaharayamasa ratnani vividhani cha. 26-27.*

Pragjyotisha Also Included Bhutan

The presents made by Bhagadatta in attending the Rajasuya of Yudhisthira included precious stones only

Introduction To Assam

found in mountainous regions, tusks of elephants, horns of rhinoceroses and swift horses (The Sabha Parva, ch. LI, 15-16). In the Drona Parva (ch. XXV, 52), Bhagadutta has also been styled as Parvatapati (King of the mountains). All these facts point to the conclusion that it not only included a portion of China, but also included Bhutan with the mountainous tracts to the north-east of the Brahmaputra ; Bhutan horses are used in Assam till to-day (Kamrup Rajavali by Padmanath Bhattacharyya).

Pragjyotisha Famous for its Elephants.

That Pragjyotisha included mountainous regions is further corroborated by the fact of king Raghu, grandfather of king Dasaratha of Oudh, finding elephants in the forests of Pragjyotisha (Saumar Bhraman by Gunabhiram Baruwa). The fact of this country being renowned in the days of the Epics for its elephants is supported from another source : "The original author of the oldest Indian treatise on elephant-training and the diseases of elephants, the Hastayurveda ascribed to Palakapya, a work compiled during the Sutra period (600-200 B.C.) is described as a man from "where the Lauhitya (Brahmaputra) flows towards the sea." (Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji's Origin and Development of the Bengali Language, pp. 70-71). That this tradition continues right upto the modern times is proved by the picture of an elephant used in their seals by the ancient kings of Pragjyotisha or Kamarupa, and by the treatise Hastividyarnava in Assamese, perhaps a rendering of Hastayurveda already referred to, so beautifully illustrated.

Pragjyotisha Stretched as Far as The Sea

In the Sabha Parva (ch. XXXIV, 10), Bhagadutta

Introduction To Assam

is described as attending the Rajasuya of Yudhis-thira "saha mlechhalh sagaranupavasibhlh". The Udyoga Parva even styles Bhagadutta as an inhabitant on the shore of the Eastern Sea ("Purvasagar-vasine" ch. IV, II). Mahamahopadhyaya Padmanath Bhattacharya opines (Kamrup Rajavali in Kamrup Sasanavali that Pragjyotisha stretched as far as the sea towards south-east of China. But Rai Bahadur Kanak Lal Baruwa, C.I.E., thinks (early History of Kamarupa) that this Eastern Sea was formed by the estuary of the Lauhitya (Brahmaputra) with that of the Ganges. He argues (Ibid) that Greek writers in their accounts mention the islands in the estuary of the Ganges and the Buddhist Jatakas describe the large sea-going vessels laden with merchandise, sailing from Chamapa (modern Bhagalpur) which fact shows how inland the sea had been about the fourth century B.C. By the Greek writers he particularly refers to Megasthenes who was an ambassador of Seleucus who resided for some time at the court of Chandra Gupta; his reports are preserved to us chiefly in the Indica of Arrian (The History of Indian Literature by A. Weber, p. 4 Footnote).

How The Eastern Sea At Last Turned to Samatata

Ptolemy (Kladios Ptolemaios, the celebrated astronomer, mathematician and geographer, native of Egypt and resident of Alexandria, and the first systematic writer on Greek astronomy in the first half of the second A. C.—Introduction to Mc. Crindle's Ancient India as described by Ptolemy) giving an account of the Gangetic plain, says that the Ganges fell into the sea through five mouths. This suggests that the delta had then already formed, and the islands dotting the Eastern sea about 1000 B.C. had now been

Introduction To Assam

joined to form a part of the mainland intersected by the several mouths of the Ganges. This extension of the Gangetic coast, now elevated above the sea-level, gradually came to be known as Samatata, meaning a plain on the sea-side. It was this Samatata that was visited and mentioned by Yuan Chwang about five centuries after Ptolemy. Both Ptolemy and Alberuni, of the 11th century, refers to the country to the east of Samatata including southern Mymensingh, western Sylhet and parts of Comilla and Noakhali, as being under the sea (Early History of Kamarupa).

Geological And Epigraphic Proof Regarding The Location of The Eastern Sea.

Even Manu in defining the boundaries of Aryavarta in Manu Samhita, really refers to this Eastern Sea :—

*Asamudrattu bai purvadasamudrattu paschimat
Tayorebantaram giryorajyavartam vidurvudhah.*

Besides the geological evidence always present, there is an epigraphic evidence too of comparatively modern times, namely the Bhatera Copper-plate inscription of Govinda Kesava Deva, king of Srihatta, (Cir. 1049 A.C.) which mentions the sea as one of the boundaries of the land granted by the king (Epigraphica Indica, XIX pp. 277-86) Babu Paresh Chandra Banerji states in his Bangalar Puravritta 'There cannot be shadow of doubt that Twenty-four Purgunas, Khulna, Yasohar, Nadia, Faridpur Bakharganj and portions of Dacca, Noakhali, Tippera were in the womb of the sea. The districts of Purnia Dinajpur, Maldah, Rajshahi, Pabna, Rungpur and others were also immersed in the sea, but this must have been a pre-historical fact. The earth of the districts first

Introduction To Assam

mentioned when tested will bring home to any one the fact that they must once have been under the sea. (bid). The hills of Assam, Tippera and Chittagong must have been on the shores of the Eastern sea.

Pragjyotisha Included a Portion of Behar.

Amurta Raja has already been described as the founder of Pragjyotisha. This king of the line of the Moon is said to be the son of Kusa and grand-father of the sage Visaramitra who performed his austerities on the bank of the Kausika (modern Kosi river in the district and province of Purnea and Behar respectively). This may prove that the ancient kingdom of Pragjyotisha embraced some districts of Behar and thus verged on Videha (old Mithila) on its west. (Early History of Kamarupa).

Mention of a King of Pragjyotisha in The Persian Chronicles of Ferishta.

From the History of the Rise of the Mahomedan power in India till the year A.D. 1612, (translated from the original Persian of Mahomed Kasim Ferishta by John Briggs, Vol. 1 of 1908 pp. IXIX-IXX). We learnt that Sankaladib, one king of old Pragjyotisha became a very powerful monarch of North Eastern India and established himself by defeating king Kedar Brahman of Northern India, who "laid the foundation and built the fortress of Kalunjar" (Ibid).

Sankaladit Conquering Bengal And Behar Also Northern India.

"In the latter part of his reign he was attacked by Sankul, a chieftain of Kooch, who having collected a large force not only subdued Bung (Bengal) and Behar, but also attacked Keddar whom he defeated

Introduction To Assam

in several actions and usurped his Empire after a reign of nineteen years." (Ibid).

Sankul, The Founder of Ganda (Cir. 700 B.C.

"Sankul having ascertained the throne, laid the foundation of Lucknow in Bengal, since known by the name of Goor or Gowr, which was the capital of the province for 2,000 years; but being destroyed in the time of Mogul empire, India became the seat of the Government. (Ibid).

"Sankul Raja maintained an army of 4000 elephants, 100,000 horses and 400,000 foot soldiers" (Ibid). "His downfall is ascribed to Afrasiyab—believed to have conquered Persia about seven centuries before the Christian era. He appears to have claimed tribute, which Sankul refused to pay. He sent an army of 50,000 Mongals against him, and a fierce battle took place in the mountains of Koch near Ghoraghat. The Mongols were defeated by overwhelming numbers and retreated into the mountains. They entrenched themselves, but were on the point of being annihilated when Afrsiyab hurried up with reinforcements from his capital Gangdozh, beyond the Himalayas and utterly defeated Sankul. The latter retreated first to Lakhanauti and then to the mountains of Tirhut, where he eventually made his submission and was then carried away by Afrasiyab" (Sir Edward Galt's History of Assam, pp. 19-20). Sankul is said to have been killed by Rustum who flourished in the seventh century B.C. (Rai Bahadur K. L. Baruwa, C.I.E., J.A.R.S., 1937).

As Pragjyotisha in Harivamsa etc., and in Kashmir annals of first century A.C.

Like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the Harivamsa and the Vishnupurana (also the Braha-

Introduction To Assam

manda Purana in mentioning the names of the eastern countries) refers to Pragjotisha ; but there is no reference to the name of Kamrupa. Rajatarangini (Hitabadi Edition, Ch. II, pp. 148-150) mentions the name of Pragjyotisha in connection with the Svayambara, the princess of Amritaprabha of this country, which Meghabahana, the King of Kashmir attended, and the reign of Meghtbahana is ascertained to be about 12 A.D. by Sir Orastyne, the English translator of Rajatarangini in his Chronological Table of Kashmir kings.

As Kamarupa first mentioned on the Allahabad rock inscription of fourth century A.C.

"The earliest notice of the kingdom (amarupa or Assam) which is of any use for purposes of the historians is the statement in Samudra Gupta's inscription on the Allahabad pillar, recorded about A.D. 360 or 370, that that Kamarupa was then one of the frontier states outside the limits of the Gupta Empire, but paying tribute and owing a certain amount of obedience to the paramount power." (J.R.A.S., p. 879, quoted by Vincent A Smith in the Early History of India, from 600 B.C. to the Muhammadan Conquest, ch. III, Kamarupa or Assam. Fourth edition, p. 383.) The relevant portion of the text of the prasasti runs as follows (Fleet's *corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum* Vol. III, p. 8.):—

*Samatata-Davaka-Kamarupa-Nepala—
Kartripuradi pratyanta nripatirvirmala
Varjanayanaraodheya madrakabhira prarjuna
Sanakanika kakakharaparikadvisha sarva
Karedanajnakarana pranama gaman.*

Introduction To Assam

Both names mentioned Kalidasa while Yuan Chwang mentions only "Klamoleupo"

Kalidasa who is said to have flourished just one century after, namely, in the first half of the fifth century A.D. (on the authority of V.A. Smith), refers to this country both as Pragjyotisha and Kamarupa (Raghuvamsa, ch. IV):—

*Chakampe tirna Lauhitye tasmin Pragjyotishes-
warah. RV.
Tamisah Kamarupanamatyakhandala Vikramam.
RC.*

But the Chinese prince of travellers Yuan Chwang two centuries later (628-645 A.D.) refers only to "Kiamo-Leu-Po" or Kamarupa (Julien's Hiouen Thsang" 111, 76) and not Pragjyotisha.

Both the names defined in the Kalika Purana

Like Raghuvamsa, the Kalika Purana uses and rather defines both the names saying that it was called Pragjyotisha, because it in this country that in the earliest times (Prag') Brahma created the stars (Jyotish') (Ch. XXVIII, 119):—

*Asyamadhye othito Brahma prang nakshatram
sasarfaha
Tatah Pragjyotishakheyayan puro Sakra
Parisamam.*

And Kamarupa is so called (in Puranic legend) since Cupid (Kama) who once being reduced to ashes by Siva regained his life or form ("rupa") in this very country (ch. LI, 67):—

*Sambhunetragninirdagdah Kamah Sambhoxanu-
grahat
Tatra rupam jatah prapa Kamarupam tatobhavat.*

Introduction To Assam

This Sanskrit treatise, *Kalika Purana*, is known to have been composed about the tenth century A.C. (*Bharatavarsha*, Vaisakh, 1337 Bs.

Both names continue till about 11th century A.C.

But again, Rajasekhara, the court-poet of Mahipala (910-940 A.C.), the Pratihara king, names Pragjyotiha, not Kamarupa, along with other countries of Aryavarta. Also, Alberuni in the 11th century, in describing the eastern countries, of India, writes, "Thence (from Tilwat or Tirhut) we came to mountains of Kamru which stretch away as far as the sea" (*Alberuni's India*, p. 201). But in quoting from the *Vayu Purana* or from *Varaha Mihira*, he mentions Pragjyotsha as a country in the east. Thus it appears that the kingdom was known both as Pragjyotisha and Kamarupa throughout Aryavarta, since the beginning of the Gupta period down to the 11th century A.D.

Pragjyotisha kings Naraka, Bhaga Datta, Vajra Datta, mentioned in the Mahabharata and Harha Charita

The *Mahabharata* (and so the *Puranas*) makes regular mention of the Pragjyotisha kings Naraka, BhagaDutta, and VajraDutta. Some reference to Naraka and his son BhagaDutta have already been quoted. VajraDutta, son of BhagaDutta, has been referred to in the *Aswamedha Parva* (Chs. LXXV-LXXVI). He had not been to the Kurukshetra war,

Introduction To Assam

for then he was a mere child ; but he immediately challenged Arjuna when the latter killed his father Bhaga-Dutta, saying :—

*"Hato Vriddho mama Pita sisum mamadya
jodhaya"*

Thus he fought very bravely, though so young, for "triratna", with Arjuna and made peace with him only when he fell on the ground the elephant on which he fought first falling. The Karna Parva (Ch. V, 29) refers to BhagaDutta's son as Kritaprajno in giving a list of the slain on the side of the Kauravas :—

*Bhagaduttasuto rajan Kritaprajno mahabalah
Syenabachharata samkhye Nakulena nipatitah.*

The Harshacharit (Ch. VIII, pp. 584-85, Jivananda Vidyasagar edition) by Banabhatta mentions yet another name, Pushpadutta who may have been Vajra-Dutta's son.

*Mahatmanasya (Narakasya) anvaye Bhaga Dutta
Pushpa Dutta
Vajra Dutta Prabhitishu byatitishu vahusu
merupamesu mahatsu mahipaleshu*

All the Copper plates of ancient kings of this country including that of Bhaskar Varman inevitably mentions the names of Naraka and BhagaDutta, and all of them save the last (granted by king Dharapala) makes regular reference to VajraDutta too. The Nidhanpur inscription (sloka 6) of Bhashkar Varman and the Gauhati Copper plate (Sl. 8) of Indrapala extols the valour of VajraDutta. But while the earlier inscriptions of Bhashkar Varma and Indrapala relates the name of VajraDutta's son, the latter copper plates of Vanamal Varma, Vala Varma, and Ratnapat refers to VajraDutta as BhagadDatta's brother. This being

Introduction To Assam

opposed to what is described in the Mahabharata, Kalika Purana and earlier inscriptions, must be regarded as a misatke of fact. In this regard, the Kalika Purana (besides the Mahabharata) must be regarded as an authority, since it is in this treatise that we find the full Naraka tradition, his origin, his first gaining of the kingdom of Pragjyotisha, and his ruin in the hands of Srikrishna (Kalika Purana, Ch, XXXVI to XL).

The Nidhanpur copper plate of Bhaskar Varman granting land at Karnasuvarna states that Pushya Varma ascended the throne of Pragjyotisha after the successors of VajraDutta reigned for three thousand years (sloka 7):—

*Vamseshu tasya nripatishu Varshasasratrayam
pada Pushya
Mabapya yateshu devabhuyam kshitiswara (h)
avarmabhuta.*

From all the Copper plates discovered and deciphered upto-date, mainly from the Nidhanpur inscription (Epigraphica Indica Vol. XII No. 13) of BhaskarVarman and the latest discovered and deciphered Dobl Copper plate (The Times of Assam, 26th May, 1945) of the seventh century A.D., we find a complete genealogy of eleven generations of Varman kings prior to Bhaskar Varman, starting with Pushya Varma.

Now we have the accurate history of Bhaskar Varman's reign from three different and very reliable sources. They are (1) the Copperplate inscriptions of old Kamarupa kings, mainly of BhaskarVarman himself; (2) the records left by Hiuen Tsiang of his travels and (3) Harshacharit (Ch. VII) by the great poet Banabhatta. According to Banabhatta, Bhaskar-Varman's ambassador, Hamsabega, met Harshavar-

Introduction To Assam

dhana just on his way to invade Gauda whose king, he had heard, killed his elder brother RajyaVardhana and tendered Bhaskar's resolve to be friends with Harsha and gave him Bhaskar's presents. And Harsha's reign in 606 A.C., is well established.

Huuen Tsiang writes, "The reigning king of (Klamo-lea-po Kamarupa) who was a Brahmin by caste and a descendant of Narayana Deva was named Bhaskar Varman ("Sun-armour"), his other name being 'Kumara' ('youth'). The sovereignty has been transmitted in the family for 1000 generations." (Watters' *Yuanchwang*, Vol. II, p. 186). Now the time of this Chinese pilgrim's visit of India (628-645 A.D.) and of Kamarupa (643 A.C.) is quite a historical fact. So the reign of Bhaskar Varman is quite well-founded.

Also on the authority of the old Copperplates already referred to, Pushya Varma is known to have ruled eleven generations earlier than Bhaskar Varman. These Varman kings of Kamarupa named in a chronological order are as follows—(1) Pushya Varma, (2) Samudra Varmā, (3) Vala Varma, (4) Kalyana Varma, (5) Ganapati Varma, (6) Mahendra Varma, (7) Narayana Varma, (8) Mahabhuta Varma, (9) Chandras-mukha Varma, (10) Sthira Varma, (11) Susthita Varma and (12) Supratisthita Varma and Bhaskar Varma (brothers). These names are found from all the three sources referred to and another source besides. It is the Seal of Bhaskar Varman found in the ruins of Nalanda giving the names of the Kamarupa Kings from Ganapati Varma, to Bhaskar Varma (*Journal of the Behar and Orissa Society*; March; 1920, pp. 151-152). Taking a century for every four generations, we find Pushya Varma reigning in the middle of the fourth century A.C.

Introduction To Assam

Reign of Pushya Varma Supported From The History of the Gupta Kings.

This date of Pushya Varman is supported by yet another fact. As the name of Pushya Varma himself has a close resemblance with the name of Pushya-mitra, the great king of the Sunaga dynasty and also with the name of Pushya-bhuti, the first king of the line of Harshavardhana, so the names of his son Samudravarma and his daughter-in-law Datta Devi bear close similarity with the names of the Gupta Emperor Samudragupta and his empress Dutta Devi, who flourished in the middle of the fourth century A.D. These coincidence do not seem accidental, but it is quite likely that this Kamrupa king whose kingdom was outside the pale of the Gupta empire but who owed some obedience to it and was very friendly with its Emperor named his son and daughter-in-law after the great Emperor and Empress as a mark of love and intimacy (Kamrupa Rajavali in Kamrup Sasanavali).

Gupta Architecture introduced into Kamarupa

That this fact of Pushyavarma naming his son and daughter-in-law after his contemporary the great Gupta Emperor and Empress is quite likely, is proved by yet another fact. In the ruins of an ancient temple in a village named Dah Parvatia near the Tezpur town of Assam, late Rakhaldas Banerji discovered an arch which revealed the style of Gupta architecture (Plastic Art of the Gupta period and its influence on later mediaeval Art, the Bengalee, March 3, 1925). This shows that not only the names of Gupta Emperors and Empresses were imitated, but even Gupta architecture etc. were introduced into Kamarupa as a proof of deep intimacy existing between Pushyavarma and the then reigning emperor Chandragupta I or his son, the famous Samudragupta.

Gupta era also introduced into Kamarupa

In 1893, the attention of Sir Edward Gait, the then Director of Ethnography, Assam, was invited to a rock inscription a little to the west of the Tezpur town, who forthwith sent a photograph of the inscription to Dr. Hoernle for deciphering (Report on the progress of Historical Research in Assam 1897, p. 4, para 8). This was subsequently fully deciphered by Mahamohopadhyaya, Dr. Haraprasad Sastri, C.I.E., (Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, December, 1917, pp. 508-514) with the help of Rai Sahib Nagendranath Vasu (Social History of Assam Vol. 1, pp. 159a-b). This was inscribed by Maharajadhiraj Sri Harjar Varma from his capital at Haruppeswara and gives the Gupta era 510 (equivalent to 829 or 830 A.D.) This proves that not only Gupta architecture, but also the Gupta era was introduced into Kamarupa about that time.

In another rock inscription in Gupta script recently discovered at Barganga in the Mikir Hills in the district of Nowgong, Assam (The Barganga rock Inscription of Maharajadhiraja Bhutivarman by Dr. N. K. Bhattasali, M.A., Ph.D., Journal of the Assam Research society, Vol. VIII, No. 4) we find that in the Gupta era 234 (554 A.C.) Aryaguna, the Prime Minister of King Mahabhuta or Bhutivarman, a successor of Samudra Varman, styles his royal master as "Param Bhagawat". Curious enough, the same epithet "Param Bhagawat", applied to the contemporary Gupta Kings appear on the coins of Chandragupta II, Kumaragupta and Skandagupta whose dates range from 400 to 460 A.C. (Sir R. G. Bhandarkar's "Vaishnavism, Saivism, and Minor Religions sects"). This shows that imitation of contemporary Gupta Kings went even to the extent of applying their epithets to these Kamarupa kings though in

Introduction To Assam

fact they may not have been any follower of Vaishnavism at all.

Bhaskarvarman of course survived Harshavardhana, who in 648 A. C. was succeeded by his minister Arunaswa or Arjuna. The Kingdom of Arjuna was invaded by the Chinese royal ambassador Wang-Hiuen-tsi with a powerful army from Tibet in consequence of being tyrannised by Arjuna when he paid a visit to India. Wang Hiuen-tsi was much helped by Bhaskar in 649 A.C. and Bhaskar is styled as "Paramount sovereign of Eastern India" in the Chinese annals of this time.

The Nidhanpur inscription of Bhaskar Varma, was of course not a new copperplate given by him, but the copperplate of his ancestor Mahabhuta or Bhuti Varma granted four generations prior to Bhaskar Varma, being burnt and damaged, had thus to be renewed and replaced (verses 26-28) :—

*Vasumatisutakramadhi—
gatapadasamutyarshadars itaprabhavasaktir Ma-
harajadhirajah Sri Bhaskaravarmadevah kus ali.
Chandraparivishaye vartamanabhavini vishaya-
patina dhikaranani cha samajnapayati viditamastu
bhavatametadvishayantahpatimayur-s almata-
grahara kshetram Rajna Sri Bhutivarmana kritam
jat tattamrapattabhavat karadamiti maharajena
jyesthabhadran vijnapya punarasyabhinava
pattakaranayasasanam dattwa sasanadahada-
bargaminavalikhitani Tebhyoksharani jasmattas-
mannetani kutani.*

The name of the kausika (modern kosi river in the Purnea district of Behar province) frequently appears in regard to the boundaries of the land granted by this inscription (verses 26) :—

Introduction To Assam

*"Jadetat kausiko pachitakashetram.....simano
jatra purvena sushka kausika. Purvadakshinena
saiva sushka kausika...uttarapurvena...sushka
kausika cheti."*

**Kausika (Kori) in Behar remains included in
Pragjyotisha, from the time of Amurtaraja
to That of Bhaskar Varma**

Harshavardhana's reign began in 605 A.C. when he presently started for invasion of Gauda and met Bhaskar's ambassador just on his way, as already mentioned. Also Hiuen Tsiang who came to Kamarupa in 643 A.C. found Bhaskar as the reigning king. So the time of this new inscription may safely be fixed in the first half of the seventh century A.C. And since Mahabhuta Varma, the original donor of the copper plate was four generations or one century earlier than Bhaskar, the time of the first copper plate may also be safely fixed in the first part of the sixth century. So it maybe no stretch of imagination to think that even from the time of Amurtaraja, already referred to, the founder of Pragjyotisha, till the reign of Mahabhuti and Bhaskar (in the sixth and seventh centuries) the Kausika in Behar was included in this country.

Bhaskar's friendship with Harsha seems to have been based on the distinct purpose of launching a joint attack on Sasanka (Narendra Gupta illustrious as the king of Gauda in the Harshacharita) whose predecessor Mahasena Gupta defeated Bhaskar's father Susthitavarma (Corpus Inscriptixonum Indicarum, vol. III p. 203) :—

*Sri Mahasenaguptobhut tasmadvitragranih
sulah.....
... Srimat Susthitavarmajuddhavijsaya slaghapada-
dakama...
... Lauhttyasya tateshu sitalavaneshu....*

Introduction To Assam

Harsha very gladly accepted this offer, for he too was aggrieved in as much as his elder brother Rajyavardhana was killed by this King of Gauda, and he already started for an invasion of his enemy's kingdom. The message (Harsha charita ch. III, pp. 585-86) sent by Bhaskar to Harsha through his ambassador is also significant :—

*"Ayamasya cha satsabadarabhyā samkalpāḥ
stheyaṁ sthānupadaravindadrayaḥ hata nāhaman-
yam namaskurjyamiti. Idrisāḥ chāyam manora-
tha śrībhuvanādurlabhaḥ tsrayanamanyatamena
sampadyate sakalabhuvanavijayena va mṛityuna
va jādī va prachanda pratapajvalanadigdahena
jagatyē kavireṇa devopamena mitrena."*

That is, "Since his childhood, Bhaskar's firm determination is that he will never salute anything else than the lotus-feet of Sthanu (Mahadeva) : a desire so rare in the three worlds, can be fulfilled by one of the three —by the conquest of the whole world or by death or by friendship with the most powerful and the only hero (Harsha)".

Sasanka (Narendra Gupta) made an attempt to attack Magadha in order to destroy the Buddhist monuments at Patna and Gaya ; but Harsha Vardhana or Siladitya of Thaneswar after making friends with Bhaskar Varman, the paramount sovereign of Eastern India or Kamarupa gave an united front and opposed Sasanka quite successfully. Harsha Vardhana occupied Magadha, and Bhaskar Varman conquered Gauda and Karna suvarna. And thus, besides Kamarupa of Puranic descriptions, Bhaskar Varman became the Supreme Lord of Karna Suvarna, Srihatta, Samatata and Pundra Vardhana (Early History of Kamarupa). The copper plate by which Bhaskar Varman granted some land after his conquest of karnasuvarna runs (sl. 2) as :—

Introduction To Assam

"Svasti mahanauhastyasvapatti. sampatyupatta jayasabda (nva) rthask anahavarat karnasuvarna vasakat."

the Ganjam Copper Plate (Epigraphica Indica Vol VI, p. 143, etc.) for Gupta era 300 (619-20 A.C.) mentions Sasanka as

"Maharajadhrāja."

Bhaskar seizes Karna Suvarna and Pundra Vardhana

Hsien Tsiang travelled in Bengal about 638 A.D. after the death of king Sasanka which occurred in 625 A.C. He mentions four kingdoms of Bengal, viz., Pundra Vardhana, Karna Suvarna, Samatata, and Tramralipta (Watters II, 182-193; Beal-Records II, 193-204), besides kajangala, the territory round Rajmahal. Pundra Vardhana and Karna Suvarna were certainly the two integral parts of the kingdom of Sasanka and must have embraced North and North-Western Bengal, namely, the districts of Burdwan, Birbhum, Murshidabad and Nadia. Hsien Tsiang, though mentioning the names of the capitals of each of the kingdoms says nothing about their king; for, by this time, "he found most of them included in Harsha's own dominion and some in that of Bhaskar Varman" (Dr. R. G. Basak, H. N. I., 227).

The Nidhanpur copperplate proves beyond doubt that Bhaskar Varman even seized the capital city of Sasanka and made this grant from the victorious camp at Karna Suvarna. It is further supported by other facts narrated in the Life of Hsien Tsiang. It is related there that about 642 A.D. Bhaskar Varma started to meet Harsha Vardhana at Kajangala near Rajmahal with an army of 20,000 elephants and 30,000 ships passing along the Ganges.

"Kumara. . . immediately ordered his army of elephants 20,000 in number to be equipped and his ships

Introduction To Assam

30,000 in number. Then embarking with the Master of the Law (Hiuen Tsiang) they passed together in order to reach the place where Siladitya was residing" "returning from his attack on Kongyodha"... Siladitya seeing him (Kumara) coming was overjoyed. "(The Life of Hiuen Tsiang by the Shaman Hwui Li, edited by Samuel Beal, popular edition, 1914 p. 172).

Bhaskar's Suzerainty Over Bengal Beyond Question

But this passage of Bhaskar's army and ships through Bengal and even his grant at Nidhanpur is interpreted by some as his ally Harsha's suzerainty over Bengal. (History of Bengal, vol. I, ch. V. "Political Disintegration after Sasanka" by Dr. R.C. Majumdar (Pp. 77-85). This is too much and rather absurd to think that a king of Bhaskar's prestige could issue a royal edict from a place which belonged to another king of Harsha's status. Besides, Bhaskar's effective suzerainty over Bengal by 648 A.D. is further proved by the Chinese Chroniclers, who in connection with the expedition of Wang-hiuen-tse definitely refers to Bhaskar as king of Eastern India (Ibid). It is also related in the Life of Hiuen Tsiang that "at the time of this meeting, Harsha himself had just returned from his victorious campaign at Kongoda, (Beal-Life, 172) the kingdom of the Sailodbhavas who formerly acknowledged the suzerainty of Sasanka" (Ibid).

"Eighteen Countries of The Five Indies".

Hiuen Tsiang divides Eastern India into six kingdoms, namely, Kamaraupa, Samatata, Tamralipti, Karnasuvarna, Odra and Ganjam (Sir Alexander Cunningham's Ancient Geography of India, p. 572). But the records of the Chinese traveller makes it clear that there were at least "eighteen countries of the five Indies" besides those of Bhaskar and Harsha

Introduction To Assam

themselves. "The same day he (Siladitya Raja) sent an order throughout the different kingdoms that all the discipline of the various schools should assemble in the town of Kanyakubja to investigate the treatise of the Master of the Law of China.

All Meeting The "Master of The Law".

"There were present kings of eighteen countries of the five Indies; three thousand priests thoroughly acquainted with the Great and Little Vehicle, besides about three thousand Brahmans and Nirganthas and about a thousand priests of the Nalanda monastery. All these noted persons alike celebrated for their literary skill, as for their dialectic, attended the assembly with a view to consider and listen the sounds of the Law; they were accompanied with followers, some on elephants, some in charlots, some in palanquins, some under canopies:

The S'akra And The Brahma Rajas.

"Then Siladitya Raja, under the form of Lord S'akra with a white chowrie in his hand went on the right; and Kumara Raja under the form of Brahma Raja with a precious parasol in his hand, went to the left. They both wore tiaras like the Devas, with flower wreaths and jewelled ribbons". (The Life of Hiuen Tsiang, Hsüi Li and Beal, p. 176).

Only Kumara's Offer Accepted.

"On this the king (Harsha) ordered them ("Kings of eighteen countries of the five Indies") to offer him ("the Master of the Law of China") gold coins and other things; Kumara Raja also bestowed on him every sort of valuable. But the Master would take none except from Kumara Raja he accepted a

Introduction To Assam

cap called ho-la-li, made of coarse skin lined with soft down which was designed to protect from reign whilst on the road". (Ibid, p. 189).

Bhaskar Taking "Rank" Above All The Indian Princes.

Sir Edward Gait (History of Assam, Revised Edition) comments on this as follows :—"It (the kingdom of Bhaskar Varman) was at any case far larger than the adjoining Kingdoms of Paundra Vardhana, and Samatata, the circumferences of which are placed at only 700 and 500 miles respectively", against 1700 miles of Kamarupa. "The King (Bhaskara) was evidently a monarch of considerable power, and he seems to have taken rank above all the twenty Rajas who accepted Siladitya's invitation to Kajughira; in the great procession there, Siladitya himself led the way on the left, dressed as Shakra, (Indra) while Bhaskar Varman personated Brahma Raja and occupied the corresponding position on the right. Both he and Siladitya had an escort of 500 elephants clad in armour."

Area Of Kamarupa Proper In Chinese Records.

From Beal's Buddhist Records (vol. II, p. 195) we find :—"The country of Kamarupa is about 10,000 li ("or 1667 miles"—Cunningham's Ancient Geography, p. 572) (nearly 1700 miles) in circuit. The capital town is about 30 li". On this point Sir Edward Gait observes :—

"As its circumference was 1700 miles, it must have included whole of Assam, (except perhaps the Naga Hills, Lushai Hills and Manipur) and also Bhutan, North Bengal as far west as the Karatoya and the part of Mymensingh which lies to the east of

Introduction To Assam

the old course of the Brahmaputra". (History of Assam). But this must have been the area of Kamarupa proper, without taking the new conquests into any account.

Kumara Vaskar And Kumara Siladitya

The name Kumara often used by Hiuen Tsiang and BanaBhutta in quite different sources, as a synonym for Bhaskar Varma, may lead us to imagine that Bhaskar like Bhishma, remained a confirmed bachelor (Kamarupa Rajavali in Kamarupa Sasana-vall). From Harsha Charit (Ch. VII, p. 585). We find that King Harshavardhana, when he reluctantly came to the throne at his elder brother Rajya Vardhan's premature death, assumed the name of Kumara Siladitya. Bhaskara too ascended the throne on his elder brother Supratisthita's death and from this analogy of and his intimacy with Harsha, he might style himself as Kumara; but that his line became extinct after him, howsoever, is a fact.

Break In The Line Of Naraka Or Verman Kings

That there had been change of hands soon after Bhaskar Varman in the kingdom of Kamarupa is evidenced by (Slokas 9 and 10) the first Copper plate inscription of king Ratnapala:—

*"Evam vamsakramena kshitimatha nikhilam
bhunjatam Naraka nam :*

*Rajnam mlechhadhinatho vidhichalanavasadeva
jagraha rajyam.*

*Salastambhah kramesyapi hi narapatayo Vighra-
hastambha mukhya :*

*Vikhyatah sambadhubu dwirgunita dasata samkha-
yaya sambidhinnah.*

Introduction To Assam

*Nirvamsam nripamekavimsatitamam Sri Tyaga-
simha bhidhan :*

*Tesham Vikshya divamgatam punaraho bhaumo
hi no Jujyati.*

*Swamiti Pravichintya tatprakritayo bhubhara-
raksha khamam :*

*Sagandhyat parichakrire narapatim Sri Brahma-
palam hi jam."*

Reign of First Pala King Kamarupa Fixed in The Latter Half of Eleventh A.C.

Now, this king, Brahmapala, referred to in the last line of the last sloka above, is the father of king Ratnapala, who gave the Copperplate. On examining the script of this Copperplate Dr. Hoernle fixes the first half of the eleventh century as the time of the inscription (Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, part I No. 1, 1898, p. 102). Again this first copperplate of Ratna Pala was given by him in the twenty fifth year of his reign (sl-20) :—

*" Samkarntau Vishnu padyancha panchavimsaṣ-
darajyake" while his second copperplate was given in
the twenty-sixth year of his reign (sl. 20 second in-
scription) :—*

*" Maya datta dwijayasmai rajye sharhvimsatab-
dike."*

From these data we may then easily ascertain that king Ratnapala must have ruled about the close of the tenth or in the early part of the eleventh century, and that his father Brahmapala must have reigned in the latter half of the tenth century.

Harjar Varma's Reign In 829 Or 830 A.C. Well Founded

Once again, Brahmapala ascended the throne of

Introduction To Assam

Kamarupa after Sri Tyagasimha, the twenty first king of the line of Mlechhadhinatha. Salastambha, died without leaving any progeny (Ratnapala's first inscription, sloka 10 quoted above). Even if we take seven generations to cover a hundred years, Salastambha's reign comes to seventh century. Further, we have already referred to Harjar Varma, one great king of the line of Salastambha whose reign is distinctly recorded in the Tezpur rock inscription as 510 Gupta era (829 or 830 A.C.).

Sri Harsha of The Line of Bhaga Datta in the Stone Inscription of Nepal in 153 Years of Tibetan Era (748 A.C.)

The stone inscription of Jayadeva, king of Nepal, inscribed in "a slab of black slate placed behind the bull opposite to the western door of the temple of Pasupati" (Indian Antiquary, Vol. IX, p. 178) contains the following (sl 15) :—

*Madyahantisamuhadantamusala kshunaribhu
mrichhro
Gaudodradi Kalinga Kosalapati Sri Harishadevat-
maja
Devi Rajyamati kulochitagunatfukta prabhuta
kulatr
Jenorha Bhagadatta Rajakulaja Lakshmiriva
kshmbhuja.*

This inscription clearly states that Rajyamati whom king of Nepal, Jaydeva married was a princess of the royal line of Bhagadatta and daughter of Sri Harshadeva who was not only a famous Kamarupa king of the royal line of Bhagadutta but also the Supreme Lord of Gauda, Odra Kalinga and Kosala etc. including the modern provinces of Bengal, Orissa, Behar and

Introduction To Assam

Ganjam besides the country of Kamarupa (as described by Hiuen Tsiang, for example) proper.

Sri Harsha of Kamarupa Also The Supreme Lord of Bengal, Behar, Orissa, Ganjam Etc.,

This inscription is dated 153 years considering this to be in the Harsha era, Mahamahopadhyaya Padmanath Bhattacharyya first thought this year to be equivalent to 759 A.D. (Kamarupa Rajavali in Kamarup SananaVall). But later he found his mistake when the great research scholar Silve Levy decided this inscription to be dated in the Tibetan era and equivalent to 748 A.D. (Le Pal, Vol. II, p. 170). Then we find that even one hundred years after Bhaskar Varman the whole of Eastern India including the modern provinces of Bengal, Behar, Orissa and Ganjam embraced by the kingdom of Kamrupa.

One Kamarupa Prince Installed as King of Orissa And One Kamarupa Scholar Donated by an Orissa King

Late Rai Bahadur Kanaklal Baruwa C.I.E. relates (Early History of Kamarupa, p. 114) the fact of one Kamarupa prince, Khemankara Deva being installed as king of Orissa by Sri Harsha Deva Rajadhiraja of Kamarupa when the latter conquered Odra about the middle of the eighth century. This is supported by scholars like R. D. Banerji (J. A. R. S., Vol. VIII, No. 4, p. 137). Also an Eastern Ganga Copperplate grant found in the Sudava village in Parlakimedi Estate in the Ganjam district of the Madras Presidency (Epigraphica India, Vol. XXVI April, 1941, pp. 62-68), granted by Maharaja Ananta Varman, son of Maharajadhiraja Devendra Varman and dated in the Ganga year 204, the donee was a learned scholar Vishnusomacharya who hailed from Sringati kagrahara

Introduction To Assam

(Singari in the present Darrang district) in Kamarupa. The relevant portion of the text runs as follows :—

*“Vedavedangaparagebhyah Kamarupa vishaye
Sringatika agra-hara Vastavyebhayah Parasara
sagotrebhyo Vishnusomacharya padebhyo viva-ha
samaye kanyadanam udaka purvamkritya—”*

From paleographical considerations the inscription is assigned to the last quarter of the seventh or the first quarter of the eighth century. This also proves a cordial inter-relation existing between Orissa and Kamarupa about this time.

Genealogy of The 21 Kings of Salastambha's Line Sketched

Now a genealogy of the Kamarupa kings of the line of Salastambha is sketched with the help of the inscriptions of Harjar, Vanamal, ValaVarma ; and Ratnapal, which stands as follows (Kamrup Rajavali in Kamrup Sasnavali, pp. 20-21) :—(1) Salastambha ; (2) Vijaya ; (3) Vigrahastambha ; (4) Palaka ; (5) Kumara ; (6) VajraDeva ; (7) HarshaVarma (or Sri Harish) ; (8) Valavarma ; (9) and (10) unknown ; (11) Chakra ; (12) Arathi ; (13) Arath ; (14) Pralamha ; (15) Harjar ; (16) Vanamala ; (17) Jayamala ; (18) ValaVarman ; (19) and (20) unknown ; (21) Sri Tyaga Sinha. By examining the script of king Valavarma of this line, Dr. Hoernle opines (Journal of the Asiatic society of Bengal, Vol. L-XVI, 1897, part II) that the inscription belongs to 975 A.D. which date roughly agrees with the date of this genealogy.

Genealogy of The Pala Kings of Kamarupa Outlined

As already mentioned in connection with Ratra-

Introduction To Assam

pala's inscription, Brahmapala of the line of king Naraka, immediately succeeded to the throne of Kamarupa after Tyaga Simha, in the latter half of the tenth century. Brahmapala is really the founder of the Pala dynasty of Gauda two centuries earlier; and both the founders are known to have been elected by the people. This is why even Dharmapala, succeeding to the throne of Kamarupa two centuries after Brahmapala mentions his name in both his Copperplates. The genealogy of Pala kings is given as below (Kamrup Rajavali in Kamrup Sashana Vali, p. 24):—(1) Brahmapala; (2) Ratnapala; (3) Purandarapala; (4) Indrapala; (5) Gopala; (6) Harshapala; (7) Dharmapala.

Survey of The Ancient Kings from Naraka (yr. 3000-B.C.) Down to Dharmapala of Twelfth Century

Thus we have a most a complete genealogy or outline of Kamarupa kings starting with Naraka down to Dharmapala of practically a historical period with which we shall deal presently. As already mentioned, kings of Naraka line ruled for one thousand generations till the reign of Bhaskar Varman (Hiuen Tsiang already quoted) in the seventh century A.C.; and 3,000 years are said to have elapsed in between the reigns of VajraDatta and PushyaVarma of the fourth century A.C. (the Nidhanpur inscription quoted above) which means that VajraDatta flourished about 260 years before the Christian era. This date almost fully agrees with the majority accepted date of the Kurukshetra war. We have also defined the boundaries of Pragjotisha in the days of the Epics from the references found in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, in the Mohammedan chronicles of Ferishta also in the Chinese annals

Introduction To Assam

and inscriptions of Kamarupa, Gauda and Nepal, down to the twelfth century.

Pragjyotishpura (modern Gauhati) the First Capital of Pragjyotisha

There appears to be no direct reference in the Epics as to the capital of Pragjyotisha, but from the Kalika Purana (Ch. XXXVI-XL we know that Narayana when desired by his consort, the Earth, appeared presently before her and her son Naraka (then in his sixteenth year), immersed with them in the Ganges and came to where Kamakhya was located, in Pragjyotishapura. There Narayana got Ghataka, the Kirata king killed by Naraka, who in turn was crowned as king of Pragjyotisha. Thus it appears that modern Gauhati was the capital of Naraka being known as Pragjyotishapura. The name of Naraka is still associated with a village long known as Narakasur Gaon surrounded with a mountain range, similarly known as Narakasur Parvat, surrounding the site of three sides, giving an idea of a natural fortress not far from the town of Gauhati. Also a stone path from the foot of the Nilachala leading to the Temple of Kamakhya at its top is called Narakasura path. It is connected with the legend still in vogue in Assam that Naraka constructed this path over-night in order to marry Goddess Kamakhya but was after all deceived by the Goddess with her supernatural power.

Origin of The Name "Guvahati" Suggested in King Vala Varma's Copperplate

There is no direct or indirect reference in any inscription of the Kamarupa kings to the capital of Naraka or Bhagatta or even of Bhaskar till we come

Introduction To Assam

to the Nagaon copperplate of Valavarma III (cir. 900 A.C.) which inscribes (sl. 5) :—

Tambulavalli parinabdugam krishnaguruskan
dhanivesitailam,
Sa Kamarupe Jitakamarupo dhanivesitailam,
Sa Kamarupe Jitakamarupo Pragjyotishasyam-
Puramadhyupasa.

This shows that Pragjyotishapura where Naraka lived (or had his capital) was full of areca nut trees and betel vines etc. And the Assamese word "Guva" (derived from the Sanskrit word Guvaka, meaning areca nut and its plant) 'Hatī' (derived from Hatta or hata 'market' and having the secondary meaning 'row' or 'line') also means a place with large rows of betel-nut plants. Thus, we have here the origin of the modern name Guvahatī given to the old old city of Pragjyotishapura.

Mention of The Capital Pragjyotishapura in Old Inscriptions.

The two Copperplates (Bargaon and Soalkuchi inscriptions) of king Ratnapala also makes mention of this residence or capital of Naraka (sl. 5 in each).

"Pragjyotishe vasadasau pravare puranam"

Then also the two Copperplates (Gauhati and Guakuchi inscriptions of Indrapala contain similar references (sl. 6 in each) :—

*Ratnaprabharuchitramaspadameya Lakshyah pun-
yopakantha villasvana amala bhari,
Pragjyotisham aparajasah sa uchchaitr Vakshas-
thalam
piturivaparamadhyuvasa.*

Introduction To Assam

Even the first two Copperplates or the Khanamukh and Subhankarapataka inscriptions of Dharmapala also refer to the city of Pragjyotisha (sl. 2):—

*Devasya Sur (kara) tanostanayah Prithivyam Jato
babhuva nripatirnarakavidhanah, Jitva satakratu
Purah saradikpatin Jah Pragjyotishapuri Chiraiya
sasaya rajyam.*

Thus Khanamukh inscription (The journal of the Assam Research Society, Vol. VIII No. 4) was bestowed in the first year of Dharmapala's reign.

Change of The Capital of Old Kamarupa Kings to Haruppeswara (Near Tezpur)

But it appears that as the throne of Pragjyotisha or Kamarupa passed from the hands of the king of the direct Naraka line to the hands of the Mlechha-dhinatha S'alastambha, so the capital town also shifted from Pragjyotishapura to Haruppeswara. But we cannot ascertain when it truly took place nor where it was exactly located. From the following reference found in the Copperplates of Harjar, Vanamala and Valavarma it seems almost clear that it was situated on some bank of the Lauhitya or Brahmaputra, though the bank is yet to be ascertained. The Tezpur rock inscription of Harjarvarma makes it almost clear that it was situated somewhere near the present Tezpur town on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra. It is further supported by the fact that king Valavarma in his Nagaon inscription definitely assigns the land granted by him to be on the southern bank (sl. 26):—

"Dakshinakula Dijjinavishayantahpatino" etc.

This particular reference to the "dakshinakula" probably implies with certainty that the king resided or

Introduction To Assam

had his capital town on the uttarakula or northern bank of the Lauhitya or Brahmaputra.

Reference to Haruppeswara in Old Copperplates

Harjar's Haiyungthala Copperplate inscription has the following direct reference (sl. 15) to his capital town, Haruppeswara.

*S'riman Haruppeswarabasi jayaskandha bara
paramaparameswara parama
Bhattaraka Paramamaheswara matapitri pada-
nudhyata Harjarvarmadeva kusali.*

The Copperplate of Harjar's son king Vanamala has a similar reference to his capital, Haruppeswara, in his Tezpur Copperplate inscription (sl. 30).

*"S'hri Lauhitya Bhattarakena sanatha S'ri Harup-
peswarat sa parama maheswara matapitripadanu-
dhyata
parameswaraparayanachittako Maharajadhiraja
Sri Vanamalavarmadevah kus'ali."*

Even the Nagaon copperplate inscription of Vanamala's grandson, Valavarma III has ample reference to his capital which, he says, was also the capital of his forefathers (sl. 25-26):--

*"Lauhitasya samipe tadeva paitamaham katam.
Tatra S'ri mati Haruppeswara namani katake
kritavasati
matapitripadamudhyanadhautakalmashah para-
meswarah paramabhattaraka
Maharajadhirajah Sri Valavarmadevah kusali."*

Change of Capital to Durjaya Invincible City

When the line of 'Salastambha' ('Mlechhadhina-tha') ceased with its twenty first king Sri Tyagasingha

Introduction To Assam

and Brahmapala started the line of Pala kings in Kamarupa in about the latter half of the tenth century, there appears to have been another change of capital from Haruppeswara. This is apparent from the Bargaon (also the Sualkchi) inscription (Lines 30-40) which states:--

Description And Location of Durjaya (Probably on Southern Bank of The Brahmaputra).

That Durjaya (literally, the invincible city) was worth its name or quite well fortified is proved by its descriptions inscribed in the first Copperplate (lines 34-36) of Ratnapala:—

*"Jaccha Sakakrirhasakunidirirha panjarena Gur-
jaradhiraja Prajvarena durdhanta Gaudendra
Karikutapakalena,
Keralesachala silajatuna vahikatayikatanke
karina dakshinatyakshaunipatipakshataya
kshitipavakshahkapatapataneva prakaren
avritamantam."*

This proves how invincible the capital of Kamarupa had been to her fierce foes as the Saka king and the rulers of Gurjara, Gauda, Kerala (Malavar), Vahika, Tayika ("countries about the Punjab",—Kamrup Sasanavali p. 105. Footnote 5) and also of the king of Dakshinatyaksha (the Deccan). Durjaya has been referred to and described in both the Copperplates of Indrapala (No. 19).

*Karituragaratnapurna rajnastasyanurupagunava-
satih
Nrpatiku Alag durjayastnnagari S'ri Durjaya
nama.*

That it was situated on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra can be understood from its references

to the Lauhitya and to the special mention of the northern Bank ("Uttarakule") in the Copperplates of Ratnapala (I, 52) and Indrapala (1, 35) where their lands were granted, just as we find the mention of the southern bank ("Dakshinakule") in Valavarma's inscription (1.35) when the capital was on the northern bank at Haruppeswara. The second inscription of Indrapala is conspicuous by the absence of any reference as to the bank on which it was situated, and it is significant. This is accounted for by saying that no mention of it was deemed necessary the land being located on the (southern) bank on which the capital itself was situated. This second inscription which is the same as the first upto the middle of the fifty second line of the former, ending with "Sri Ratnapala Varmadeva Kusali," just begins:—

"Kalangavishayanthapati bhuman"

in the place where the first inscription starts "Uttarakule" etc. Now the Kalang is a tributary of the Brahmaputra flowing from the south and "Uttarakule" most probably refers to the grant being located about the Kalanga.

**Purandarapala "Surascha sukavischa" and the
reigns of other Pala kings**

Now, Brahmapala whose reign is fixed in the latter half of the tenth century A.C. was succeeded by his son Ratnapala whose two copperplates bestowed in the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth years of his reign (already quoted) show that he must have ruled for nearly thirty years. Ratnapala's son was Purandarapala to whom is ascribed "the authorship of Nitikusum, a rendering of the Sanskrit work Sukraniti in the then Kamarupi speech. He is referred to in both the copperplates of his son, Indrapala, (sl. 11-15):—

Introduction To Assam

Asidudarakirttirdatabhokta suchin kalakusalah
Tasya (Brahmapalasya) Purandarapalah sunuh
surascha sukavischa.
Kritamatikautukama sakrinmrigayarasikena jena
samarehi
Kshanavitrachita sarapanjaravaddhai ripuraja-
sardulaih
Jamadagnabhujavikramarjita Prajyaraajya nripa-
vamsa sambhamam
Durlabheti sa tu loka-Durlabham prapya samya-
gabhavat kalatravana.

This shows that Purandarapala was not only virtuous and heroic but was also a great artist and poet; and he married Durlabha who was the princess of a king who enjoyed his kingdom as acquired by Jamadagnaya (Parasurama). But we are in dark as to who this king was and which kingdom he possibly ruled. In the same inscriptions (lines 32-35). We also find:—

*Pragjyotishadhipatyasam khyatapratihatadan-
dakshopita sesharipupaksha S'ri Varaha parames-
vara Paramabhatta—raka Maharajadhiraja S'ri
Ratnapalavarmadevapada nudhyata parames-
vara Paramabhattaraka Maharajadhiraja S'ri
Madindra pala varmadevah Kusali.*

This shows that Indrapala succeeded his grandfather Ratnapala. It evidently proves that Purandarapala died before he succeeded to the throne of his father, and also that Indrapala must have come to the throne early in life and consequently reigned long like George III. At any rate Indrapala must have reigned in the middle of the eleventh century, and his son Gopala and grandson Harshapala in the latter half of that century. So the reign of king Dharmā-

Introduction To Assam

pala, son of Harshapala may be placed in the first half of the twelfth century. (*kamarup Rajavali*).

Three copperplates inscriptions of king Dharmapala have been possessed upto date, the latest discovered one being the Khanamukh (Nowgong, Assam) grant. (The Journal of the Assam research Society, Vol. VIII, No. 4; October, 1941). It was bestowed in the first year of his reign (verse 7, Second plate of this inscription, reverse):--

"Rajna 'Sri Dharmapalena rajye prathamavatsyare" etc.

**Third shifting of capital from Durjaya to
'Kamarupa nagara'**

And his second (earlier known as the first) grant was allotted in the third year of his reign (Verse 21. lines 47-48, of this inscription):—

"Rajye nife narapatih pradadau trivarshe."

But both these copperplates are silent in regard to the capital city of Dharmapala which could ordinarily be explained away by saying that no mention of it was deemed necessary since Durjaya still continued to be its capital. But the third copperplate which is unfortunately not dated, definitely names the city Kamarupa Nagara (v. 20).

*Kamarupanagare nripobhavad Dharmapala iti
sanvajadhayah
Jayakirtivarada jagajjaratpanjarodargata smara-
jate.*

Introduction To Assam

The new Capital 'Kamarupa Nagar' probably far from any bank of the Brahmaputra

Neither the site of this new capital nor the cause nor the time of it being shifted has yet been quite definitely known. Still less we know about its author. Mahamahopadhaya Padmanath Bhattacharyya thinks that the capital must have been changed sometime before Dharamapala came to the throne, since he would certainly have mentioned of it had it occurred during his reign (Kamrup Rajavali, pp. 19 & 28). Whatever time or whatever site it might be, it seems certain that it was never on the bank of the Brahmaputra (Lauhitya) since even the slightest references to it is not found in the three inscription of Dharmapala, while all the inscriptions are eloquent in descriptions of the same river when the capital was seated either at Haruppeswara on the northern or at Durjaya on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra. Again, we have not been able to adduce sufficient proof as to where the capital of the kings of the line of Bhagadutta was actually situated even in the reign of Bhaskar in the seventh century A.C. If we could know it we could find the probable site of the capital of Dharmapala too, since these Pala kings of Kamarupa claim to have resumed their reign by belonging to the line of Bhagadutta after the line of Mlechhadhinatha Salastambha became extinct (Ratnapala's inscriptions, verses 9-10 already quoted).

Kamatapura or its site the probable capital at Bhaskar Varma's time

Sir Alexander Cunningham says:—"From Paundra Vardhana or Pubna, in middle India, the Chinese pilgrim proceeded 900 li or 150 miles to the east, and

Introduction To Assam

crossing a great river entered *kia-maleu-po* or *Kamarupa* (Julien's *Huen Tsiang* III, 76)". "Now *Kamatapura*, the capital of *Kusa Vihara* is exactly 150 miles or 900 li from *Pubna*....while *Gohati* (said to have been the old capital of *Kamarupa*) is about twice that distance or say 1900 li or 317 miles from *Pubna*.... As the position of the former agrees exactly with the distance recorded by the pilgrim it is almost certain that it must have been the capital of *Kamrup* in the seventh century.... The great river crossed by the Pilgrim would therefore be the *Tista* and not the *Brahmaputra*.... On the southeast the forests were full of wild elephants which is still the case at the present day. The king named *Bhasker Varma* who claimed descent from the God *Narayana* or *Vishnu*, and his family had occupied the throne for one generations." *Ancient geography*, edited by S. N. Majumdar Sastri 1924, pp. 572-73).

Dharmapala's capital ascertained from an early biography

King *Dharmapala* is well known to us through the early biographies of *Sankardew* composed about the close of the sixteenth century in connection with his battles and peace with king *Durlabha Narayana*, which fact in turn was responsible for the migration of *Chandivara*, the forefather of *Sankardewa*, to *Kamarupa*. The first and foremost of these early biographers was *Ramcharan Thakur*, own nephew of *Madhawdev*, the greatest disciple of *Sankardew*. The facts gathered from his work show that *Dharmapala* was the king of *Kamatapur* and hence was called *Kamateswar* or *Kameswra*, and his rival and his distant cousin was *Dhurlabh Narayan* who ruled over *Gauda* and was hence styled as *Gaudeswar*.

Introduction To Assam

Dharmapala and Durlabh Narayan cousins ruling Kamarupa and Gauda respectively

Ultimately through a curse of the Goddess Kamakhya Dharmapala left his own kingdom which was then amalgamated by Durlabhanarayan in his own kingdom and this capital of Durlabh lay at a distance of nine hour's journey or walk from Behar. The text in Assamese says (ch. IX, verses 2572-28) :

*"Dharmapala raja achhileka Kamesvara ;
Tahante Khataya Jata Bhuyan niratara.
Kamakhya Deviye jeva tanka sapa dita ;
Aponara rajya eri Videsaka gaila.
Dekhileka loke jeve bhailleka araja ;
Gaone gaone bhaila teve save Bhuyan raja.
Durlabha Narayana tar velegid bhai ;
Sio kata dine rajya bhaila eka thal.
Beharara para tini praharara bat ;
Garia nagar raja Durlabhara pat.*

This king Durlabhanarayana too is an extremely well known figure and a great patron of learning referred to by many early Valshnavite poet of Kamarupa who resided in his kingdom. So it appears that Kamata and Gauda were then adjoining kingdoms ruled by kings of Kamarupa.

Again, Dr. Buchanan Hamilton who as early as 1809 A.C. came to visit the ruins of Kamatapura records :—"Dharmapala's city,—About two miles from a bend in Tista, a little below Dimla (in Rangpur District) are the remains of a fortified city, said to have been built by Raja Dharmapala.... It is in the form of a parallel gram, rather less than a mile in length and about half a mile in breadth.... Dharmapala had a sister-in-law, Mainavati, the remains of whose fort

still exists on the west bank of the Deonai river about two miles west from Dharmapal's fort.... At some distance from the south of this existed a circular tomb probably that of Harichandra whose daughter was married to Gopichandra the son of Nainavati, and who succeeded his uncle Dharmapala in his government." (Hunter's Statistical Account of Kuch Behar, pp. 360-2).

**Probable cause of shifting capital Kamatapura
and other sites**

Dr. Hamilton further continues :—"Towards the east side is a small square heap which is said to have been the temple of the Goddess Kamateswari which is extremely probable." p. 365) "Hindu tradition has it that on the fall of the city, the fortunate amulett of Bhagadutta retired to a pond".... (p. 368-9). This we find that Kamatapura, the ruins of which city lies at a distance of fourteen miles to the south west of the later capital at the present Kuch Behar State, was in all probability the Kamarupa Nagar the seat of Dharmapal's government in the twelfth century. That the same site might also be the capital of Bhaskarvarma is suggested by the reference contained in it to the tradition of "the fortunate amulett of Bhagadutt." And this is confirmed by Sir Alexander Cunningham's conclusion (already quoted) that from the details given by Hiuen Tsiang it must have been the capital at Kamatapura that this Chinese pilgrim visited and not Gauhati (ancient Pragjyotishapura) which might be the earliest capital since the reign of Naraka. Conquests of Bengal, Behar, Orissa, and Ganjam, and consequent extension of Kamarupa to the west in the reigns of Bhaskar, Harsha (and even upto the reigns of the Pala kings till the twelfth cen-

Introduction To Assam

ture) might be responsible for this shifting of capital from Gauhati. And the change of capital to Harup-peswara and Durjaya in between the reigns of Bhaskar and the Pala kings seems to be accounted for by the connotation Mechhadhinatha of Salastambha and his line of kings who reigned till the commencement of the reign of the Pala kings who claimed to be descendants of Bhagadutta and his line (verses from Ratnapala's inscriptions already quoted).

Further proof—Kamrup and Kamata used as Synonymous by Muhammadan Chroniclers

Still more, the Muhammadans who came to India at the beginning of the thirteenth century knew this country as Kamrud or Kamru. But later Muhammadan chroniclers used to refer to this country both as Kamrud and Kamata. In *Ayin-I-Akbari* (11, 3) we definitely find "Kamrup, which is also called Kamtah" etc. Sir Edward Gait also corroborates the same view when he writes—"At the period with which we are now dealing the whole tract upto the Karatoya seemed still, as a rule, to have formed a single kingdom, but the name had been changed from Kamarupa to Kamata. The Muhammadan historians sometimes speak as if the terms Kamarupa and Kamata were synonymous and applicable to one and the same country" (*History of Assam*, Ch. III pp. 42-43, second edition). Even the Maldah Madrasa inscription and the recently discovered Kantaduwar Inscription of Hussain shah contain both the names Kamata and Kamaru as if they are synonymous. (Kamarupa Rajavali, p. 31 footnote).

In all probability, 'Kamata,' is a corruption from 'Kamada' which is a synonym for Kamakhya who is also called Kamarupa (*Kalika Purana* 64-73), other

Introduction To Assam

synonyms appearing together in a single verse of the Kalika Purana (62-2) :—

*Kamada Kamini Kama Kanta Kamangadayini
Kamanganasini jasmāt Kamakhya tena choch-
yate.*

Kamakhya is also called Kantesvari; and curious enough, the great fortress of Kamatapura is called Kantesvar Garh. The copperplate grant of Vanamala mentions.

*"Sri Kamesvara Mahagauri bhattarikabhya-
madhisthitasirasah, Kamakutagireh satatanitam-
bakshalanadhikata, Pavitra payah sampurnas-
rotasa" etc. (sl. 30).*

and the second copperplate grant of Indrapala gives similar reference "*Mahagauri Kamesvarayoh*" etc. (v. 26). All the copperplate inscriptions testify that the kings of Kamarupa down to the twelfth century were worshippers of Kamada or Kanta (perhaps both the words confused and corrupted to Kamata) or Kanteswari (Kamakhya) and Kantesvara (Siva); and wherever they founded their capital they possibly established symbols (Jantra) of Kanteswari and Kanteswari and Kanteswara (Haruppeswara might be such a name of their God or his symbol) for worship. So it is no wonder if their last capital Kamrup Nagar was later on called Kamata by the name of their Goddess Kamada (Kamake). Similarly, Kamateswar or Kanteswar (literally Lord of Kamata (Kamada) or Kanta) rather refers to the God than to the king.

In the Silimpur inscription (Epigraphia Indica vol. XIII, v. 22, p. 292) one Kamarup king Jayapala, has been mentioned :—

Introduction To Assam

*Jah Kamarupanripater Jayapalatevanamnastula-
purushadaturachintadhamnah ; Hemnam satani
nava nirbharamarthyamano naivadade dasasato
dayasasanam cha.*

History Behind Phonology of Kamata.

Jayapala has been referred to simply to prove the spirit of sacrifice of one Prahasa who even declined to accept the offer of 900 gold coins and a grant of land yielding 'one thousand' dronas of paddy in connection with the Tula-purusha gift of this Kamarupa king. But there is no knowing when he ruled nor is there any room for his reign in between Brahmapala and Dharmapala having definite epigraphic records of their reigns. So it is surmised that he must have ruled after Dharmapala, being his son or grandson (Kamrup Rajavali p. 36) king Jayapala's name further appears in a verse in a manuscript "*Chhandogaparistataprakasha*" preserved in the India office, London (Ep. Inde. XIII, p. 289) :—

*"Kshmapala Jayapalatah sa hi mahasradham pra-
bhutammaha ; danam parthiganaaranarda hrida-
yah pratyagrahit punyavan.*

From internal evidences put forward by Mahamahopadhyaya Padmanath Bhattacharyya (Kamrup Rajavali, pp. 36-38) both these records may be assigned to the middle of the twelfth century which must have been the time of Jayapala. He seems as liberal, powerful and virtuous as worthy his predecessor Dharmapala from the inscription and manuscript referred to above. No other epigraphic records, local or foreign, copper-plates or rock inscriptions, are known to have mentioned any other Kamarupa king.

**Hostile Contact With The Kings of Gurjara, Gauda,
Kerala And The Deccan Etc., Etc.**

Dr. Hoernle opines :—"Of Ratnapala it is related that he came into hostile contact with the kings of Gurjara, Gauda, Kerala and the Deccan, and with the Bahikas and Taikas. Assuming that Ratnapala's age has been rightly fixed at about 1010 to 1050 A.D. the king of Gurjara at that period would be the western Chalukya king Jayasimha III or Somesvara I. By the Kerala king the Chola Rajaraja is perhaps intended. The Gauda king may have been Mahipala or Nyayapala of the Pala dynasty of Bengal and Behar. To whom the term "king of Dakshinatya or the Dekkan" may refer I do not know. The Bahikasa and Taikas are generally taken to be Trans-Indus people—those of Balkh and the Tajiks". (J. A. S. B. part I of 1898, p. 105). This is of course based on Ratnapala's first inscription (lines 34-36) describing the capital, Duryaya.

**Invasion By A Chalukya Prince, Karnatendu
Vikramanka.**

The Vikramanka charita (Ch. III, V 74) by Vihlana records :—

*"Tasyonmulita Kamarupanripati Prajyapratapa-
sriyah"* etc.

in connection with the conquests of the eastern countries by Karnatendu Vikramanka, the Chalukya prince, during the reign of his father (1040-1071 A.C.). Either Indrapala or his son Harshapala must have ruled in Kamarupa about this time, and this must have had no lasting effect in the kingdom of Kamarupa.

Introduction To Assam

Jatavarma's Conquest Of Kamarupa Is Baseless.

Also in the Velava inscription of Bhojavarma, ruler of Vikramapura and in a verse in connection with his grandfather, Jata Varma, reference is found to Kamarupa (inscriptions of Bengal, Vol. III, p. 20) :—

*"Jongeshu prathayasriyam paribhavamstam
Kamarupasriyam."*

This has been explained by late Rakhaldas Banerji as Jatavarma conquering the countries of Anga and Kamarupa (*Bangalar Itihas*, pt. 1 second edition, p. 277). But Mahamahopadhyaya Padmanath Bhattacharyya conclusively proves that the verse as it stands cannot mean so and there being pun on the words 'anga' and 'Kamarupa' the verse simply means that such beauty ('sriyam') was manifested in Jatavarma's limbs ('angeshu') that by it even the beauty of Cupid ('Kamarupa sriyam') was vanquished (Kamrupa Rajavali p. 39). In support of his standpoint he refers to another verse (16) from the rock inscription of Jayadeva, king of Nepal, (Indian Antiquary Vol. IX, p. 179) :—

Angamsriya parigatojita Kamarupah Kanchigunadhyavanitabhirupasyamanah" etc.

So the conquest of Kamarupa by Jatavarma is baseless.

Vaidya Deva's Kingship Over Kamrupa Not Well Founded.

Ramacharita by Sandhyakar Nandi, refers on more than one occasion to the conquest of Kamarupa by Ramapala, king of Gauda in such lines as,—

Introduction To Assam

*"Tasya jita Kamarupadi vishayavinivrittamana
sampadya "3|47.*

"Vigrahanirjita Kamarupabhut" 4|5.

The relevant verse (13) in Vaidyadeva's inscription (Gauda Lekhamala p. 131) :—

*"Etadriso hariharidubhuvi satkritasya Sri Tim-
gyadeva nripatervikritimnisamya; Gaudeswarena
bhuvi tasya nareshvaratve Sri Vaidyadeva urukir-
tirayam nijuktah."*

This simply states that king Timgyadeva who was in charge of the government of the eastern territories, having rebelled during the time of Kumarapala, son of Ramapala, Vaidyadeva was installed in the kingship in his place. There is no mention here either of Kamarupa or Pragjyotisha; but there are mentions of 'Pragjyotisha bhukti' and 'Kamarupa manadal' in regard to the location of the land granted (Vaidyadeva's Inscription lines 48-49, Gauda Lekhamala, p. 134). This simply may mean that the land granted was sometimes included in the Pragjyotisha or Kamarupa kingdom, and nothing beyond.

The Donee of Vaidya Deva, And King Kumarapala's Time

Further still, the donee for generations lived in the village Bhavagrama (now located in Bhavata) about 22 miles to the west of the present town of Bagra (Bagurar Itihas, second edition p. 112) decidedly on the west of the ancient river Karatoya which usually formed the western boundaries of Kamarupa proper. So there is no definite proof of Kamarupa having been conquered by Ramapala of Gauda who must have been a contemporary of Dharmapala's father Harshapala. Gauda Rajamala and Bangalar Itihas by late Rakhal-

das Banerji assigns the latter half of the eleventh century to be the time of Ramapala. He further writes in his article "Palas of Bengal" (ch. VI):—"Ramapaladeva was succeeded by his second son Kumarapala about the year 1097 A.D." (Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Vol. No. 3, p. 101). Then Kumara-pala was a contemporary of Dharmapala, and as such he could never be in the kinship of any part of Kamarupa proper.

**Conquests of Kamarupa by the Sena kings, Vijay
and Lakshman is not confirmed**

The Deopada inscription (inscriptions of Bengal, vol. III, p. 48 V. No. 20) is interpreted by some as Vijayasena's conquest of Kamarupa. But the relevant line in verse is—

*"Gaudendramadravadapakrita Kamarupabhupam
Kalingamaji jastarasa jigaya."*

Mahamahopadhyaya Padmanath Bhattacharyya opines that the word "Apakrita" in the above line seems to suggest the then Kamarupa king (Dharmapala or any of his successors, may be Jayapala already mentioned) was expelled by Vijayasena when the former attempted an invasion of the latter's territories (Kamarupa Rajavali, p 42 Footnote 3). Similarly the phrase "*Vikramavasikrita Kamarupa*", occurring in the Madhainagar inscription (Inscriptions of Bengal, vol. III. p. 3 line 32) is explained as Laksomansena, the grandson of Vijaysena, conquering Kamarupa; but it has no conformation from any fact or record of Kamarupa, epigraphic or otherwise. But the epigraphic records already amply prove that Kamarupa kings retained their kingdom in tact even till the reign of Jayapal of the latter half of the twelfth century.

Introduction To Assam

Kamarupa as in the Kalika Purana, Vishnu Purana and the Yogini Tantra

The famous *Kalika Purana* (cir- 900 A.C.) assigns that the Kamakhya Pitha was at the heart of the Kingdom, by the accounts given in the *Vishnu Purana* the country had a radius of one hundred Yojanas with Kamakhya pitha at its centre. The *Yogini Tantra* (cir. 1400 A. C.) gives even a more detailed description. It says that the country was one hundred Yojanas in length and thrice ten Yojanas in breadth, and that it was triangular in its shape. The boundaries of the kingdom have been defined as the Karatoya on the west and the Dikrong and the Dikhow on the east, the Kunjagiri on the north and the confluence of the Lakshya or Lakshmi and the Brahmaputra on the south :—

*"Tridasa yojna vistirnam dirghena sata yojanam;
Kamarupam vijanihi trikonakaramuttamam.*

*"Karatoyam samasritya javaddhikaravasinim;
Uttarasyam Kunjagiri Karatoyattu paschime.
Tirthasreshtha Dikshu Nadi purvasyam Girikan-*

*yaka
Dakshine Brahmaputrasya Lakshyayah sangama-
vadhi Kamarupa iti khyatah sarvasashtre-
shu nischitah."*

Ratna, Kama, Suvarna and Saumar Pitha Divisions.

The country of Kamarupa was divided into four divisions or pithas, the westernmost boundary now being narrowed down to the Karatoya. So the westernmost division, the Ratnapitha, was bounded by the Karatoya on the west and the Swarnakosha (now Sonkoh), the eastern boundary of the present state of Kochbehar, on the east. Then the Kama-pitha in between the Sonkoh and the Rupika (now Rupahi) in Khagarijan (or Nowgong, Assam). Swar-

Introduction To Assam

napitha stretched between the Rupahi and the Bhairabi (now Bharali) in Tezpur. The Eastern division, Saumara pitha lay between the Bharali and the Dikrang) in the Lakhimpur Subdivision (Saumara Bhraman). These pithas also refer to Kamrupa Dharma Mandal divisions.

Persian chronicles—the first Muhammadan invasion (1206 A. C. repulsed)

Between the last epigraphic record of about the middle of the twelfth century and the regular chronicles of the Ahom rulers about the middle of the thirteenth century, there are some records of the Muhammadan chroniclers to throw a little light on the internal condition of Kamarupa otherwise in dark. Mahammad Bakhtiyar Khlji's invasion of Tibet is described in *Ta-baquat-i-Nastri* (Raverty's translation, Vol. I p. 560) and in *Riyaz-us-Salatn* (Abdus Salam's translation, pp. 65-68). About 1198 A.C. he overthrew the last Sena-king of Bengal, Lakshmaniya and some years hence started on his expedition to the north. The king of Kamarupa was then styled as Kameshwar and the Karatoya even then formed the western boundary of the kingdom. The invader was repulsed presently and was saddled with heavy loss of his soldiers; Bakhtiyar himself escaping with a few hundred horsemen. The conquest on the side of Kamarupa has been recorded in the Kanai Barasi rock inscription near the present town of Gauhati, which reads :—

"Saka 1128. Saka Turagajugmesemadhumasa-
trayodashe;
Kamarupam Samagatya Turashkah kshayama-
yayuh.

This is equivalent to March, 27, 1206 A.C. approximately.

Introduction To Assam

The second and third Muhammadan invasions (1227 & 1257 A.C.) doomed

The *Tabaghat-i-Nasiri* (Raverty, vol. I, p. 594) mentions that about 1227 A.C. one Governor of Bengal, Ghiyasuddin attempted the second invasion of Kamarupa but returned unsuccessful. This invader is said to have proceeded as far as Sadiya up the Brahmaputra but was then expelled out of the kingdom. The same source (p. 263) reveals that again about 1257 A.C. Ikhtiyaruddin Yuzbak Tughrilkhan launched the third invasion of Kamarupa and was at first successful; but finally met with a sad reverse resulting in the loss of all their lives including that of the Sultan himself.

The fourth Muhammadan invasion (1337 A.C.) crushed

There occurred another, which seems to be the fourth invasion of Kamarupa in 1337 A.C. by Muhammad shah who "sent 100,000 horse-men well equipped to Assam, but the whole army perished in that land of witchcraft and not a trace of it was left. He sent a second army to avenge the former disaster, but when they came to Bengal, they would go no farther, and the plan had to be given up." (The Alamgirnamah, p. 731).

The Khen dynasty and destruction of Kamatapur in 1998 A.C.

Niladhvaj, the founder of the khen (khyan) dynasty of Kamarupa is often considered to have been the Kameswar or king of Kamarupa during the first three Muhammadan invasions of Kamarupa, with his capital at Kamatapur on the left bank of the Dharala. He is said to have at first been a mere cowherd who came to the throne about 1294 A.C. by overthrowing the

Introduction To Assam

last Pala king of Kamarupa. This suggests that the Pala kings must have ruled till the end of the twelfth century. Niladhvaj was followed by his son Chakradhawaj who in turn is said to have been succeeded by his son Nilambar the last king of the khen dynasty, (Gait's History, revised edition, p. 44) Nilambar is said to have come to the throne about 1455 A.C. about 250 years after Niladhvaj, which apparently proves that not two but more than three generations must have passed between kings Niladhvaj and Nilambar. Whatever that may be, Kamatapur, the capital of Kamarupa was put to destruction in 1498 by double treachery. Nilambar's minister, Sachipatra, who on the pretext of going on a pilgrimage really went to Gauda and invited its ruler Hussain Shah to invade Kamata for personal revenge. Through a surprise attack, Nilambar's army was more than a match for that of Hussain Shah and it was soon put to flight. But Hussain Shah while admitting defeat requested Nilambar to permit his wife to see Nilambar's queen. Trusting in his honour, Nilambar granted his wish, and Hussain Shah by this means introduced some armed men, captured the city and took Nilambar a prisoner who however made a miraculous escape and was not heard of since.

Muhammadan conquest of Kamarupa never became lasting

Niladhvaj is said to have imported many Brahmans from Mithila. Nilambar constructed a grand road from Kamatapura to Ghoraghat and a part of it even today forms the main road between Kochbehar, Rangpur and Bagra. He was a king of considerable power and ruled the country between the Karatoya and the Barnadi. According to Muhammadan chronicles, Hussain Shah left his son as a Governor of Kamata (western Kamarupa) at Hajo west of the Barnadi. The

Malda inscription commemorating this conquest by erecting a Madrassa, is dated about 1501-02 A.C. A later attempt aimed at annexation of the Ahom kingdom resulted in complete annihilation on the Muhammadan army and passing away of Kamata from off their hands. There is a tradition (J.A.S.B., 1874, p. 216) that Ismail Ghazi conquered Kamatapur about 1460 A.C.; but it is unconfirmed Gait's History p. 45 footnote). India's connection with the Muhammadans begins about 712 A.C. when Muhammad bin Kasem invaded Sind, the kingdom of Dehar; and regular Muhammadan rule began in India about 1192 A.C. when Muhammad Ghorî once defeated and pardoned by king Prithviraj, launched a sudden attack on his patron, imprisoned and killed him and laid the foundation of a Muhammadan kingdom in India. Ghorî died in 1206 A.C. the very year in which Bakhtiyar attempted his first invasion of Kamarupa; and Muhammadan conquests of Kamarupa, as a rule, never became lasting and invasions were mostly frustrated.

**King Durlabh Narayan's identity and time
(cir. 1200 A.C.)**

Kings Dharmapala and Durlabh Narayana styled as Kameswar and Gaudeshwar respectively, and described as cousins, have already been mentioned as found in the Sankar Charit by Ramcharan Thakur of the sixteenth century. Sir Edward Gait refers to him "One of the legends of the Bara Bhuya mentions Durlabh Narayan as a Raja of Kamata and if it can be relied on he would seem to have ruled, at the end of the thirteenth, century, over the country between the Bar Nadi and the Karatoya." (History of Assam, p. 43). Now that we have found mention of this king by nearly half a dozen poets of the Pre-Vaishnavite Age (1100-1450 A.C.) whose patron he is declared to have been besides

almost all the biographies of later times and in legends referred to by Sir Gait, little room is left for any doubt about his identity. And Sir Gait places him "at the end of the thirteenth century". But from epigraphic records we have fixed his contemporary, king Dharmapala, in the first half of the twelfth century, and naturally then Durlabh Narayan cannot belong to the thirteenth century. Besides, Landadew, one of the forefathers of, and four generations earlier than Sankardew, was a contemporary of king Durlabh (R.C.T. verses 50-51). Now Sankardew's birth in 1449 A.C. is now well established; and that like himself Sankardew's ancestors without exception lived for an average of 90 or 80 years, is also clear from the old biographies which we have no ground generally to disbelieve. Even taking on average of 75 years, for a generation of this particular line, we find 1100 A.C. as the time of Landadew or his contemporary kings Durlabh or Dharmapala which exactly corresponds to the epigraphic records already mentioned.

Durlabh's genealogy and his reign over Kamata

In the sources mentioned above, sons of Dharmapala and Durlabh are named Tamradhwaj (R.C.T. verse 90) and Indra Narayan respectively. The latter appears in Drona parva by Kaviratna Saraswati:

*"Nripa stromani, deva mahamani, Durlabha Narana raja ;
Nite putrawate, palila satate, prithivira jata praja.
Tahana tanaya, bhaila dharmamaya, Indranarayana dewa.*

Ramchandra Thakur even gives a genealogy (Sankar charit, verse 56-62) of Durlabh's immediate predecessors, his father being Pratapdhawaj, an intelligent

Introduction To Assam

Kayastha youth and minister to king Simhadwaj, whose throne he usurped by killing him, and also gives the names of Durlabh's mother Parvavati and his seven wives (V. 63). But Bharmapal and Durlabh, though usually styled as Kameswar and Gaudeswar are also styled in the reverse order, as though Kamata and Gauda are synonymous. About Gaudeswar Durlabh we find in the Prahrad charita by Kavi Hem Saraswati :—

*"Kamatamandal (e)" Durlabha Narana, nripa-
vara anupam,
Tahan rajyata, Rudra saraswati, Devajani kanya
nam.
Tahana tanaya, Hema saraswati Dhruvara anuja
bhai,
Padavandhe tenho, prachara karila, Vamana
Purana chat."*

Also Kavi Harihar Vipra in his Vavruvahanar juddha (Aswemedha Parva, Mahabharata) writes :—

*"Jaya jaya nripati, Durlabhnarayana raja,
Kamata pure bhaila Vitravana
Saputra vandhawe jeve, sukhe raja karantoka
Jiwantoka sahasra vatsara.
Tahan rajyata thita Sadhujana mononita
Aswamedha virachila sara;
Vipra Harihara Kavi, Haritra charanasevi
Padavandhe Karile prachar."*

Kameswar and Gaudeswar Became Synonymous

Thus we find the words Kameswar and Gaudeswar hopelessly mixed up. Sir Galt observes on this point :—"This title (Gaudeswar) was often claimed by quite petty chiefs and in the eighth and ninth cen-

Introduction To Assam

turies there were at times as many as six princelings in North Bengal all calling themselves Gaudeswar simultaneously (Archaeological survey of India, vol. XV. p. 111). Gaur was also the ancient name of a part of the modern district of Sylhet." (H.A. p. 40). In all probability, the territories about the Karatoya were then ruled by many minor kings, each calling himself, Kameswar or Gaudeswar as he happened to choose, and this is amply proved by the instances of Dharmapal and Durlabh.

Invaders of Kamarupa to the east—the Tai clan of the Shan Tribe, (1228 A. C.)

All this is about the Ratnapitha and Kamapitha on the western divisions of the Kamarupa Kingdom, west of the Barnadi. We are enlightened about the Suvarna pitha and Saumara pitha or the eastern divisions, particularly by chronicles of a race of foreign invaders who made their appearance in the eastern extremity of the Brahmaputra and having a well developed historic sense. They were the forefathers of the present Assams or Ahams originally belonging to the Tai (celestial origin) clan of the Shan tribe, who had their territories somewhere in the northern and eastern hills of upper Burma perhaps Mau-lung, under their leader *Sukapha*. His forefathers *Khun-lung* (prince-elder) and *Khun-lai* prince-younger) are said to be the son of *Leng-don* (-one-powerful) or *Indra*, the God of heaven, by whose desire they are said to have descended from heaven by a gold ladder with their following in the year corresponding to 568 A.C. and are said to have alighted in the country to *Mun-gri-mun-gram* (—country-deserted country-uninhabited), with no other mission than establishing a kingdom on earth by the elder as king and the younger as his minister.

Introduction To Assam

Sukapha (1228-1268) the first king founding the Aham kingdom in Saumar Kamarupa

Sukapha, due to a private dispute, is said to have left Munlung, where his predecessors subsequently reigned, about 1215 A.C. with eight nobles, and 9,000 men, women and children, and two elephants and three hundred horses. In 1228 he arrived at the bank of the *Kham-nam-jang* after moving about for the thirteen years in the hilly tracts of the Patkai or the extreme north-east Assam range, and now and then making raids in the Nagar villages. Step by step he proceeded to Hamrup, Tipam, Habung and such other places of present upper Assam by atrocities on the Nagas and others who stood in his way, and leaving a noble here and a detachment there to look after the territories he has traversed, till at last he built a city at Charaidew, about twenty miles to the south east of the present town of Sibsagar, in 1253 A.C. Sukapha then fought with and defeated the Narans and the Barahis then under their kings Badan-cha and Thakumtha ruling over the neighbouring territories; but then made friends with them encouraging inter-marriage and adopting conciliatory measures. These foreign invaders called this land Mung-dun-sun-kham-(country-full-garden-gold) in their own tongue. Sukapha died in 1268 A.C. leaving his son Suteupha to succeed him.

The Chutiyas, Kacharis and Bhuyans ruling in Saumara and Suvarna divisions in the thirteenth century A. C.

Now these Tai invaders not only give us connected accounts of the country since, but also throws sufficient light on the internal events of the country in the eastern divisions, namely, in the Saumara and Suvarna pithas, about that time. From those accounts, con-

firmed here and there by other sources, we learn that in those early days of the thirteenth century, "a line of the Chutiya kings ruled the country east of the Subansiri and the Disang, with the exception of a strip to the south and south-east where several small Dodo tribes enjoyed a precarious independence. Further west, there was a Kachari kingdom, on the bank of the Brahmaputra which probably extended half-way across the Nowgong district.... west of the Kacharis on the south bank, and of the Chutiyas on the north, were a number of petty chiefs called Bhuiyas. The boundary between the tract ruled by these Bhuiyas and the kingdom of Kamarupa (Kamata) doubtless varied from time to time; a powerful prince would bring many of them under his control, but they would again become independent when the sceptre passed into the hands of a weaker ruler." (Gait's History of Assam, R.E., P. X. 38).

Original meaning of Bara Bhuyans

The Bhuyans or the Barabhuysans, as they are generally known, were once supposed to indicate some connection with the aboriginal tribe of Bara Bhuyan of Chota Nagpur. That it was wrong, late Dr. Wise, with reference to feudatory chiefs of Eastern Bengal, also called the Bara Bhuyans has clearly shown (J. A. S. B., 1874, pt. 1. P. 197; and 1875, pt. 1. p. 181). The word *Bhuyan* is undoubtedly derived *bhumi* (land), *bhaumik* or *bhumyadhikar* (landlord), and was employed to mean a feudatory king or chief. The term 'Bara' which is equivalent to 'twelve' in Assamese (and the noted Bar Barabhuysans and 'Saru Barabhuysans' of Kamarupa are as a matter of fact each twelve in number), seem really to have been used to mean 'many' in its original Sanskrit sense (as in *Barangana* for example) and it is in this sense, we find 'Bara

Introduction To Assam

bhuyans' usually meant. But also as Sir Gait observes, "It seems to have been the practice in this part of India for kings to appoint twelve advisers or governors. Nara Narayan had twelve ministers of state; twelve chiefs or Dolois administered the hilly portion of the Raja of Jayantla's Dominions, and there were twelve State councillors in Nepal. The number may thus have become connected in the minds of the people with all dignitaries ranking next to a Raja, and so have come to be used in a purely conventional sense." (H. A., p. 39).

Original home of the Bara-Bhuyas according to the old biographies

We have already referred to a war (R. C. T. verses 78-79) between kings Dharmapal and Durlabh, cousins and styled as Kameswar and Gaudeswar respectively. The treaty between them was concluded, it is generally admitted in all the biographies of Sankardew, by the transfer of seven families of Kayasthas and seven of Brahmans from the kingdom of Durlabh to that of Dharmapal, among whom was Chandibar Bhuyan the great forefather of Sankardew (R. C. T. verses 83-90). These fourteen families again have a past history of their own and are known as Bara Bhuyans hailing sometime back from Kanyakubja or Kanauj. In one Gomotha Vansawall of Raghupati in Assamese, it is clearly stated that they left Kanyakubja on account of a terrible Muhammadan invasion of the place:—

*"Kanauj Nagar dham sasye matsye anupam,
Bara Bhuyan achhila tathat;
Save haye mahatejt, Rajar viswasbhaji,
Asi masi ubhaye lagat.
Akasmat pangapal Javanar mahipal,
Kalla gras Kanauj Nagar;
Dese haila hanhakar Javan kare mahamar,
Raja praja hol ekakar."*

Introduction To Assam

The names of the Kayastha leaders are given as Chandibar, Sridhar, Hari, Srihari, Sripati, Chidananda and Sadananda, and those of the Brahman leaders as Krishna, Raghupati, Rambar, Lohar, Baran, Dharam and Mathura, in one of the old Guru charits.

Kanaujpur, the colony of the Bara bhuyans

These Bara Bhuyans, the fourteen families of Kayastha and Brahmans, were established by Gaudeswar Durlabh Narayan in his own kingdom and the place where they resided soon came to be known as Kanaujpur, naturally the name commemorating the original home of its inhabitants, and the Gomatha Vamsawali of Raghupati already referred to, mentions this fact in a sanskrit verse

*"Chaturdase te Kanyakubjasamagatan dvijan ;
Sthapayamasa tan sarvan Durlabha Narayana
nripottamah.
Chaturdasanamani pramani samridhwani cha ;
Vasaritham pradadau tebhyah Narottamah Durla-
labha Narayanah.*

It could not be exactly known whether this was the first and last instalment or batch of Kayasthas and Brahmans coming from Kanyakubja, but facts reveal that the families were greatly re-inforced, specially the Kayasthas when they came to Kamata or eastern Kamarupa ; under Dharmapala who made them established with land-grants and slaves, in certain parts of his kingdom.

Origin of the Bara Bhuyans according to the charit

According to *Adi charita*, a poetical work of doubtful authorship which is ascribed to the great Madhawdew, the accounts of the Bara bhuyans differ essential-

Introduction To Assam

ly. The narration given in this book is said to be related by Sankardew himself to Nara Narayan on the king's enquiries about him (A.C., verses 3-4) and the story is as follows. Arimatta, the ruler of the kingdom of Ratnapur (v. 6) with Viswanath (in the present Darrang district) as his capital, on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra, dying without any issue, left his minister Samudra in charge of his kingdom. Lakshmi, a daughter born to Samudra's son, Manohar and his wife Sachi, became an orphan in her seventh year by the deaths of both her parents. She then invoked the goddess who was her namesake to come to her help, who presently appeared before her and gave her a '*vijamantra*' of five letters by which she could gain any husband of her desire. On her twelfth year, she used this '*vijamantra*' to gain the Sun as her husband and was consequently successful in begetting two sons by him, named Santanu and Sumanta. Santanu married Champa by whom he had twelve sons who as granted by their Solar grandfather ruled as chiefs on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra with Lakshmipur, named after their grandmother, as their capital; and became renowned as Bara Bhuyans. Sumanta married Bhadra by whom he too had twelve sons who also, as ordained, ruled as chiefs on the southern bank of with Rampur as their capital. Sankardew is said to have styled himself as a descendant of Sumanta, the younger son of Lakshmi, who died after his eighty fifth year. (Adi charit, verses 5-91).

Bara Bhuyans Defeated Chutiyas and Kacharis but were subjugated by the Saumars

The Adi charit proceeds further and says that as the Bara Bhuyans ruled as chiefs at Viswanath in Ratnapur, the Chutiyas and Kacharis came one by one and proposed to become their kings; and the Bara

Introduction To Assam

Bhuyans not only resented at this but fought them and drove them out in turn. Then came the Saumara (—Asams or Ahams) who made the same proposal which was likewise rejected. This resulted in a war with them which ended with a defeat on the side of the Bhuyans, but by conciliatory method the Saumar kings at last managed to keep them under their control and conquered the Chutiyas and Kacharis with their help, and thus became lords over the four countries of Vidarbha, Kurmat, Ratnapur and Saumar (A.C., Vs. 92-214).

Historicity of *Adi Charit* and authenticity of its narration doubtful

Like the authorship, the historicity of *Adi charit* is doubtful. As the composition seems to lack the serenity and classicism of Madhawadew, the accounts also appear to be mainly based on legends and popular traditions and as such are less than authentic. Arimatta himself is at best a legendary figure. The kingdom Ratnapur is said to be founded by one Vikramaditya, youngest son of Janmejaye who in turn was the son of Parikshita and great grandson of Yudhishthira (vs. 221-25). Pratappuri, a king of this line had a son named Mayamatta whose two sons and one daughter were Arimatta, Nagamatta and Dai respectively. Dai is said to have been married to Brahma's son Lauhitya (Brahmaputra) and Ari and Naga were established as kings at Viswanath and Rathapur (present Majuli or the river island) while Mayamatta was killed by the hands of Airmatta in a chase. (vs. 226-54). But this legend too essentially differs from other legends mentioned by Sir Gait (H. A. pp. 18, 19, 39).

Dr. Wade's version of Arimatta's legend

Dr. John Peter Wade gives yet another version of Arimatta's birth. "Afterwards Jitaree, a Chatre came

Introduction To Assam

from Drabir, paid his devotions to Madhow and became Rajah of Camroop. He established his residence at Roobayasull mountain (Kuberachal) and gave rise to a line of seventeen princes, who ruled the country in succession to the time of Ramsunder (Ramchandra). In the capital of the latter resided a virgin of the Soodreh caste, who attended by several companions visited the Lohicheh (Lauhitya) for the purpose of bathing. Berhampooter (Brahmaputra) captivated by the beauty of the damsel conveyed her beneath his flood. A son named Arimuttu was the result of their embraces. Arimuttu slew Doolubindreh, Rajah of Bayhar, called himself Comoleswar (Kamateswar) and succeeded to his Government. From hence, he proceeded to Camroop, attacked and destroyed Ramsunder and established his throne at Bsijurghar (Valdyargarh) where he constructed a fortress. Sometime after he abandoned Baijurghur in favour of Prehtawbpoor (Pratappur) to the north of Bishwenaut (Viswanath) where he erected a fort. Thence he removed his seat of Empire to Camroop. Phengooa khoonur (Konwar), nephew of Doolubindreh (Durlabhendra) resided in a fort of his own construction at Soanparuda under the government and in the service of Arimutta (An Account of Assam, 1800, pt. II pp. 180-81).

Assessing the Historical Value of the Adi Charit

This Dr. Wade's accounts of Jitari and Ramchandra is curiously supported by one Rajvamsawali by Ratikanta :—

*"Jitari namat ek kshatrya achhita ;
Bhakti bhawe Madhawaka sevi Raja bhaila ;
Kuverachalat pat kari rajya khaita."
"Jitariye adi Ramachandra bhaita anta ;
Ehtmate chaturtha purusha bhailenta."*

Introduction To Assam

The Arimatta legends are so hopelessly divergent that it will simply be a wild goose chase here to make an attempt to reconcile them. One of the traditions names Ratna singh as Arimatta's son (as Ratnamala is said to be his wife, whence perhaps is the name of the kingdom, Ratnapur), and another names him Jongalvalahu (whence perhaps is derived the name Jongalgarh of Nowgong, Assam) while Adi charit names no son (and wife) of Arimatta at all. So in regard to his father's name and other details we find simply a bundle of contradictions. So the Adi charit cannot be depended as anything approaching a history of the Bara Bhuyans. But the eldest son of Sumantra named Kanaujavara, is said to have lived in Behar for some time giving rise to the name of Kanaupur and then breathing his last at Rampur on the southern bank of the Brahmaputra; and his son and grandson are named Chandivar and Landa Bhuyan respectively. But we know even from Sankardew's own composition that this is anachronism and that Adi charit is a hopeless patch work by some comparatively recent writer, ascribing it for some motive to Madhawadew. Even then the fact stand that the Bara Bhuyans were for long ruling chiefs "west of the Kacharis on the south bank and of the Chutiyas on the north" which is further confirmed by the Adi charit and other biographies of Sankardew.

Sir Edward Gait, in his report on Historical Research in Assam, and Mr. W. B. Brown in his Deori-Chutia Grammar describes a few of the legends of the Chutiyas whose original home was "not far removed from the home of the Shans and whose "appearance suggests that they have in their frames a considerable infusion of their blood", but whose language was "unmistakably Bodo". (H. A. Gait P. 40). "But the Chutiyas trace their origin to king Bhismaka who ruled in

Introduction To Assam

Vidarbha—(identified with Sadiya “where the Chutiyas were actually found to have ruled) and whose daughter Rukmini, was married by God Krishna evidently pointing to their following a Hindu dynasty. So it is that we have two sections of the Chutiyas viz., the Ahom Chutiyas and Hindu-Chutiyas. Whatever this may be, the founder of the Chutiya kingdom is, according to tradition, one Virpal whose son Sonagiripal (Gaurinarayan) subjugated the Chutiyas of Rangalgiri, Nilgiri, Chandragiri etc. and defeating king Bhadrasen established his capital at Ratnapur assuming the name of Ratnadhwaipal. Ratnadhwaipal is also said to have defeated another king Nyayapal and to have managed to get the hands of the princess of Kamatapura in marriage. The eighth king of this line is known as Dhirnarayan, whose son was assigned by the Ahom king an estate bounded on the east by the Rota river and on the west by the northern course of the Dhansiri, on the north by the road of Kavira and on the south by the Brahmaputra. The Tamreswari Temple of the Chutiyas at Sadiya meant for worship of the goddess Kechai khati (eater of raw flesh) was even after their subjugation by the Ahoms in the sixteenth century noted for its human sacrifices, a practice which was found also among other hill tribes such as the Tipperas, Kacharis, Koches, Jayantias (and Khasis) of old Kamatapura. (Human sacrifices in Ancient Assam by Sir Gait, J.A.S.B., 1898, p.56).

Subjugation of the Chutiyas by the Ahoms in 1523 and their rebel in 1527.

In the reign of the Ahom king Sutupha (1364-76) the Chutiyas encountered with the Ahoms resulting in the Ahom king's murder and subsequent interregnum (1376-80). The Chutiyas were of course defeated by the next king Tyaokhamti who came to the throne in

Introduction To Assam

1380. We know very little about them till in 1513 or 1516 A.C. we hear of one Chutiya king Dhirnarayan or Chandranarayan invading the Ahom kingdom under Suhung-mung alias Dihingiya Raja (1497-1539). The chutiyas were defeated and saddled with heavy losses, and the Ahom king occupying Mungkhlang and the places round Namdang, built a town there. In 1520 and 1522, the Chutiya and Ahom kings attacked each other with alternate success and defeat till in 1523 the Chutiyas were brought under complete subjugation by the Ahoms, who had their capital still at Charaideo. The Chutiya kingdom was now annexed to their own and appointed an additional State officer, Sadiya khowa Gohain to govern it. Once more the Chutiyas rebelled in 1527 but were subdued after some trouble. The first king under whom the Chutiyas are said to have come into power about 1223 A. C. is named Ratnadhvaj and the last weak and treacherous king under whom they lost their kingdom is named Nitipal. In order to prevent further rebellion the Chutiyas after 1527, are said to be made scattered all over specially round about Chutiya, a place in the present Darrang district, which still suggests the fact by its very name.

The Kacharis, an aboriginal tribe and their pre-historic wide and long domination over the country.

The Kacharis it seems, are one of the earliest aboriginal tribes living in Kamarupa, for comparatively a very long period with perhaps a great primitive civilisation, which is apparently proved by the ruins of Dimapur, described by Major Godwin Austen (J. A. S. B., 1874, p. 1) and by Dr. T. Bloch (Archaeological Report for 1902-03). "The wide extent and long duration of Bodo domination is shown by the frequent occurrence of the prefix 'di' or 'ti', the Bodo word for water,

Introduction To Assam

in the river names of the Brahmaputra valley and the adjoining country to the west e.g. Dibru, Dikhu, Dihing, Dihong, Dibong, Disang, Dimla etc. In some cases the old name is disappearing—the Dīchu river, for instance, is now better known as Jaldhaka (and Dichai as Bhogdai)—while in others it has already gone, as in the case of the Brahmaputra, which in the early days of the Ahom rule was known as the Ti-loa..... The Ahoms ruled in Assam for seven hundred years, but their word for river (nam) occurs only in a few instances in the extreme east, eg. Namrup, Namtsik and Namsang. They called the Dikhu, the earlier Kachari name has survived in spite of them." (Gaits H.A., pp 6-7) "In the Brahmaputra valley the Kacharis call themselves Bado or Bodo fisa (sons of Bodo). In the Kachar they call themselves Dimasa, a corruption of Dima fisa or "sons of the great river". They were known to the Ahoms as Timisa clearly a corruption of Dimasa, so that this name must have been in use when they were still in the Dhansiri valley." (Ibid, p. 247)

Their fabulous origin and descent from Siva.

Like the Koches, about whom we shall speak presently the Kacharis seem to claim their descent from god Siva, and the Ahams do from god Indra and Chutiyas from king Bhishmaka, the father-in-law of Krishna. Dr. Wade in his Account of Assam (ch. 111) compiled from an Ahom chronicle relates to legends about this fabulous origin of the Kacharis. One Déongdani had paid her devotion to god Siva to have her a male child by him and in granting her prayer, Siva appeared before her in the form of a native Kachari and the son of her desire was born as the result of their embraces. Birhas the reigning king of the country and witness badomens and was ordered by Siva in a dream



Introduction To Assam

resign his government. According to the prevalling custom of the Kacharis the man from whose hand the State elephant would receive his food the moment the state cock, both preserved for the purpose, would crow should become the king of the Kacharis. On the resignation of Birhas and their consequent search for a king by the above formula, Deongdani's son was found out and installed as king under the name of Vicharpatia while the former king who gave his daughter in marriage to him and himself served as his Prime Minister.

Genalogy of the Kachari kings upto Detsongfa.

Vicharpati-fa who much increased his territories by new conquests, was succeeded by his son Vikramaditya-fa who made further extensions of the Kachari kingdom. He is said to have two images of their god and goddess, popularly known as Bra-Bri or Burha-Burhi, having their counter-parts in the Hindu god and goddess, Siva and Durga or Kall. Establishing of these gold images in his own residence and in another town is said to be responsible for the names Sonapur and Banpur respectively in his kingdom, Sonapur, his capital, lying many miles to the south-east of the town of Gauhati. His brother Mahanani-fa who was the governor during his reign and made big tanks succeeded him the throne and shifted his capital to Lakshmindarpur. On his death Mahamani-fa ascended the throne and became known as the Prince of Hurum, making his brother Mani-fa the governor of Lakshmindarpur. Mani-fa then succeeded his royal brother and was succeeded in turn by *Larafa* who became the Prince of Hurum and Karafa the governor of Lakshmindarpur. On *Larafa's* death, Karafa succeeded him to the principality of Hurum and Detsonga-fa to the governorship of Lakshmindarpur. (An Account of Assam, 1800 A.C., pp. 59-60).

Introduction To Assam

Their racial and linguistic affinities

Now, as the Kacharis as a race appear to have been akin to the Koches, their linguistic resemblances show a very near affinity with the speeches of the Chutiyas, already mentioned, and of the Lalungs and Marans of the plains and of the Garos and the Tipperas on the hills. These Bodo people even today are widely distributed and the spread of a uniform Bodo language over practically the whole of modern Assam and north-east Bengal points to their wider distribution and domination over eastern India at some remote period. But there are no records of their rule extent nor their traditions appear so rich as to afford us any means of surmise. The Kacharis of North Kachar claim their descent from the line of Ha-tsung-tsa, who ruled in Kamarupa long ago. Sir Risley in his 'Tribes and Castes of Bengal' mentions that according to the Limbu legend of creation one of the two progenitors of the human race settled in the Khachar country at the foot of the hills between the Brahmaputra and Kosi rivers, and there became the father of the Koch, Mech and Dhimal tribes. On this point Sir Gait observes :—"The omission of the aspirate is a common occurrence in words borrowed from Bengali or Assamese. . . The district of Cachar may have got its name directly from this word or it may have been so called after its principal tribe. In any case it is certain that the Kacharis did not get their name from Cachar." (H. A. p. 247).

The Kachari capital shifted from Dimapur to Mailhong (1536)

As already referred to, the Kacharis in the thirteenth century were found to have had their dominions extending mostly from the Dikhou to the Kalang river, of practically the Suvarna pitha, along the

Introduction To Assam

southern bank of the Brahmaputra, embracing the tract about the Dhansiri and the present North Kachar sub-division. It seems, therefore, that at this time the Kachari kingdom was bounded on the east by the Chutiya and on the west by the Kamata territories, but about the close of the thirteenth century, due to the thrust of the Ahoms from the east, the Kacharis east of the Dikhou, seems to have withdrawn to concentrate their power. For in 1440 we find a great battle fought on the bank of this river with defeat inflicted on the Ahoms, and another two battles fought with them about the Dikhou in 1526 with defeat and conquest respectively the side of the Ahoms. In 1531 the enemies encountered afresh in the south of the Golaghat resulting in the defeat of the Kacharis and death of Detsa, their king's brother. The Ahoms followed the Kacharis even to their capital at Dimapur, up the Dhansiri, forty-five miles to the south of Golaghat. The king Khun-khara left the capital and Detsung was set up by the Ahoms in their place. But in 1536, he too rebelled to the effect that the Ahoms plundered the capital town and murdered Detsung. Then the Kacharis left Dimapur and established their new capital at Maibong in north Cachar. This is from Sir Gait; the accounts of Dr. Wade differ in many important respects and do not seem dependable.

Dimapur suggesting Hidimba of the Mahabharata

About the middle of the sixteenth century the Kachari king is found to be styled as lord of Hidimba, and this name Hidimba or Hidamba often appears in inscriptions and other records since. So we find a suggestion here that Dimapur may actually have been a corruption of Hidimbapur, being the country of Hidimba and Ghatotkacha connected with Bhima, and being of the Mahabharata or Kurukshetra fame.

Introduction To Assam

Biographical records of the Kachari rule

Silver coin dated equivalent to 1583 A.C. and discovered at Maibong shown Jaso Narayan Deva "a worshipper of Hara-Gauri and Siva-Durga of the line of Hachengsa" (J. A. S. B. 1912, Vol. VIII, p. 556). Three undated silver coins have also been found at the same time and place, the first issued by Jaso Narayan too, and the other two by Pratap Narayan alias Satrudaman. Another coin figured by stapleton (J. A. S. B. Vol. VI No. 4, p. 160) has been identified by Potham as a Tamradhwaj.

Rise of the Koches and their origin discussed.

After the fall of Kamata in 1498, we have noticed that the Muhammadans could not hold the country long and it was divided by different chiefs among themselves. About this time, in 1515, Vishnu, one of such chiefs pushed his way to the front by defeating the Bhuyan chiefs of the country and also subduing the chiefs of Phulguri, Vijni and other places. He thus made himself the master of the country left of the Bar Nadi and east of the Karatya and assumed the name of Viswa Simha. His father was one Haria Mandal a Mech or Koch who is said to have married two sisters, Hira and Jira, by the first of whom was born Vishnu (so named for being born on the day of Vishuva samkranti or Vihu) while from the second was born his second son Sisu. To what race these Koches or Rajvamsis, as they style themselves, west of the Manah river, belong is not yet conclusively proved. They are sometimes identified with the Kuvachas of the Puranas and Tantras. Colonel Delton called them Dravidian while Rissley said they had an inter-mixture with Mongoloid stock, the Dravidian characteristics preponderating. But Sir Gait opines that the true Koches are a Mongoloid race,

Introduction To Assam

undoubtedly, much akin to the Meches and Garos. He asserts that formerly the Koches and Meches had free inter-marriages, which has of late been checked by the fact of the former being now Hinduised (H. A., pp. 46-47 ; Assam Census Report 1891, p. 212 ; Bengal Census report, 1901, p. 382).

The Kshatriya origin of the Koch kings described

But the *Daram Rajvamsawali* (analysis in the J. A. S. B. Vol. LXIII by Gait) which is now available in print (Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta, 1917) composed by one Suryakhar! Daibajna about 1793 A.C., (Sir Gait's Koch Kings of Kamarupa ; Pandit Hemchandra Goswami's Introduction to *Daram Rajvamsawali*, P. XII) gives an argument as to the Kshatriya origin of the Koch kings. Sons of Sahasrarjuna, a Kshatriya prince, son of Haihaya, of the line of the Moon, killed the sage Yamadagni father of Parasuram. The latter in his fury wanted to avenge the murder of his father by removing all the Kshatriyas on earth, specially the son of Sahasrarjuna. Parasuram almost succeeded in his awful enterprise save that twelve sons of this kshatriya king concealed their identities being merged in the Mech population by manners and customs and by marriage (vs. 27-47), the last verse referred to giving the name of Chikanbari as the place of their refuge. This is identified with Chikan Gaon in the Khuntaghat paragana of Goalpara whence Hariya Mandal hailed. The names of these twelve families are described (v. 51):—

*Panbar Phedela aur Guwabar ;
Kathia Vaihagu Megha Yudduhabar nam ;
Garhkata Jagai Dokhora anupam.*

These are mostly Bodo or Assamese names. These twelve persons are said to be progenitors of the Koch,

Introduction To Assam

and Hariya Mandal was the chief of these twelve families.

Fabulous origin of Vishu from god Siva.

Like the Kacharis, already mentioned, the Koches also claim their descent from god Siva and the story is almost the same. It is stated that through rather a curse of Parvati, Siva came down to earth while his consort too was born of a Mech woman. She was named Hira and was married to Hariya Mandal whom she used to supply food while he would work in the field. One day on her way she found Hariya sitting on the bank of the Awakjoar waiting for her, partook of the food and received her into his embrace. On return from the field annoyed, Hariya had a quarrel with Hira on this point, but was pacified by a dream where Siva removed the misunderstandings and foretold how they would soon gain a son who would rule the earth (vs. 52-69). The result of this union was Vishnu "*Pratham Vishu dīna utapati bhaila*" (v. 70).

Vishu was a both leader. He and his younger brother Sisu, born of Hira, performed heroic feats even with their playmates (vs. 75-88). Even as an youth of sixteen Vishu defeated the Bhuyans Auguri, Phulguri, and of other places. Thus before long Vishu installed himself as king Viswa Simha and established his capital at Kochbehar to the north of the old capital of Kamatapura. (Vs. 112). His kingdom seems to have been bounded on the west by the

Vishu as king Viswa Simha (1515 A.C.), Capital at Koch Behar, Invasion of Garhgaon, Return.

karatoya and on the east by the Barnadi. He sent for the twelve families of Mech who came of the

Introduction To Assam

Kshatriyas and gave them office. It is also related that Viswa Simha led an army of 5,225,000 soldier, carrying goods over innumerable elephants, horses, asses, buffaloes, bullocks and camels, to invade Assam, or the kingdom of Ahams and reached as far as Garh Gaon, the Aham capital. But their provisions running short and the scrupulous and virtuous Viswa Simha, preferring failure to plunder of the Aham kingdom, returned to his capital forthwith (vs. 198-206).

It is further stated that though Viswa Simha came back with the resolve of re-invading Saumar (Asam) with better money and re-inforcement, he felt himself otherwise destined by Kamateswari Mahakali whom he worshipped. He found that it was the desire of the goddess that he must now marry and see that the eighteen sons that would be borne to him would carry out his plan of invasion. (vs. 207-28) Accordingly he married eighteen wives from different parts of India, all on the same day. They are described as follows (vs. 231-35):—

Viswa Simha Marries Eighteen Wives From Different Parts of India

*"Nepal desat Ratnakanti name kanya ;
Param sundari tehe rupe gune dhanya.
Hemaprabha Padmawati dui varanari ; ..
Gauda des madhve tanka pailanta vichari.
Chandrakanti Purmakanti Hemakanti Rati ;
Kamarupe chari kanya paila mahasati.
Kasmere desat kanya Tilottama nam ;
Param rupasi sarva gune anupam.
Chandra Chandranana Jaya vijaya Jayanti ;
Kasi dese paila pancha kanya rupawati.*

Introduction To Assam

*Lalita Lawanyawati name Padmamala ; ..
Sonitapurat tini kanya paila bhala.
Satarupa Kanchanmalini kanya dui ;
Darasan matrake mahajano moha hui,
Mithilat dui kanya pailanta vichari ;
Param rupast dui jena Vidyadhari,
Vasar sajal ani thaila bhine bhine ; ..
Samsatake vina karailanta eka dtne.*

They were all, of course, the Gandharva marriages (v. 236).

His Eighteen Princes Assigned Different Duties by a Successful Device,

By these wives eighteen sons were born to Viswa Simha and their names, each to each, have also been narrated (vs. 240-49). The princes were Narsimha, Narnarayan, Sukladhuwaj, Gohainkamal, Mayadan, Ramchandra, Sursimha, Mansimha, Mecha, Brishaketu, Ramnarayan, Ananta, Dipsimha, Hemadhar, Meghnarayan, Jugat, Rupchand and Suryya. The Viswasimha found out a device to ascertain as to whom he should make his successor and also to what different duties others of his sons should be employed. It was a successful plan and by it he made Narnarayan alias Malladew his heir and Sukladhwaj the future general and assigned different functions to his other sons. (vs. 249-264). The fact of Viswasimha marrying eighteen wives and having eighteen sons is confirmed by a quite different source. Durgavar, a poet who flourished about the close of the fifteenth century, refers to Viswa Simha saying:—

*"Kamata Iswar vando viswa Simha nripavar ;
Othara mahishi vando othara konwar."*

Introduction To Assam

Malla and Sukla, Their Studentship at Benares And Conquests of Marang And Nepal Countries.

Viswa Simha presently despatched his two sons, Malla and Sukla, to Benares, where they carefully studied all the useful branches of learning under one Brahmananda Sannyasi (vs. 265-68):—

*"Vyakarna Puran Sruti Smriti Mimamsar ;
Sikilanta astra sastra Atharva vedar.
Sam dam daya bheda nyaya niti jata ;
Jyotirved Tarka sastra sike nanamata. . .
Eka mane parhe duyo tyeji ana kam ;
Bhane Surya kharhi daki bola Ram Ram."*

After a reign of twenty-five years Viswa Simha died (v. 273), and Narasimha, taking advantage of the absence of his brothers Malla and Sukla, declared himself the king (v. 285). But a nurse of the real heir and general, sent a message to them at Benares and with the leave of their teacher the two forthwith returned and fought with Narasimha who of course was defeated. Following their success, they entered the country of Marang where Narasimha with his son would be sheltered ; and its king eventually made his submission to them. Then Narasimha fled to Nepal, Malla and Sukla following and the king of Nepal with his army subsequently surrendering. Then he left for Kasmere but the two brothers chased him no more, but returned home (vs. 289-98).

Narasimha Becomes King of Bhutan

From Kasmere Narsimha with his son is said to have come to that part of Hemavanta mountain between the rivers, Samkha and Hindola, which was formerly the seat of the king Sailya of the Kuru-kshetra fame. There, as pre-ordained, he settled and made himself the king of Bhutan ; for Viswa Simha

Introduction To Assam

also assigned him to be king but in a different country. The names of Bhots whom he appointed in different offices are also detailed (vs. 299-310). On this point Sir Galt remarks:—"The occurrence is not altogether impossible. It has already been mentioned that in ancient times Bhutan seems, occasionally at least, to have formed part of the kingdom of Kamarupa" (H. A. p. 50). This finds further confirmation from Sir Ashley Eden when he says:—"Apparently the Bhutias have not possessed Bhutan for more than two centuries; it formerly belonged to a tribe called by the Bhutias Tephu; they are generally believed to have been people of Koch Bihar. The Tephu were driven down into the plain by some Tibetan soldiers, who had been sent from Lhassa to look at the country. (Political Missions to Bhutan, P. 108).

Retrospection of Viswa Simha's Rule (1515-40 A.C.).

Viswa Simha, who seems to be the first Koch convert to Hinduism, became a great patron of it. He is said to have first rebuilt the Temple of Kamakhya on the Nilachal hill at Gauhati, and divided off the people under various officers, such as Thakurias, Saikias, Hazaris. His fruitless invasion of the Ahom kingdom is described in the Ahom chronicles as a friendly visit to king Suhung mung in 1537. It is further related in the Ahom chronicles that when the Muhammadans advanced as far as Kallabar up the Brahmaputra in order to invade the Ahom kingdom, they were driven away by the Ahoms who followed their success as far as the Karatoya in 1532. But this has no confirmation in the Koch records. Viswa died in 1540 A.C.

Coronation of Nara Narayan and Erection of a Road From Koch Behar to Sadiya.

To return to Malla and Sukla, the former of course

Introduction To Assam

was immediately installed as king Naranarayan in his father's dominions as also in his newly acquired territories, while the latter was made his commander-in-chief, being now named Samgram Simha about 1540 A.D. Immediately he took a census of his paiks (men) who numbered 5,225,000 and made a large preparation for invasion the Ahom kingdom which his father left unaccomplished. He asked his brother Gohain kamal to erect a road as far as Parsuram kunda in Sadiya, about 400 miles from their capital, and to dig tanks each at a distance of six hours' journey from the other; and this was completed within a year (vs.313-24).

Naranarayan's Invasion And Ahom Raja's Submission.

Then Samgram Simha led a vast army of 532,000 soldiers gaining conquests after conquests over all chiefs or minor kings that stood on his way and making necessary contracts with them, till they reached the Ahom capital only to find its king and nobles become fugitives at Charai khorong. The Koch army is said to have stayed in the Ahom capital for a year, and not finding them yet turning up Naranarayan sent his man to Charai khorong threatening to attack him there. Thereupon the Ahom king is said to have sent Nar Narayan one vessel full of gold and two vessels full of silver, one elephant covered with gold and another with silver, sixty elephants and the same number of valuable cloths, sixteen families of Matias and twenty of Asams (Ahoms) with his agent Sundar Konwar to tender his submission to Naranarayan, who presently accepted the offer and went back. (vs.329-86).

Confirmation of Koch Capture of Ahom Capital And Koch Suzerainty Over Ahom Kingdom in the Ahom Chronicles.

The Ahom chronicles narrate an expedition led by

Introduction To Assam

Sukladhwaj in 1546 resulting in a battle with the Koches about the Dikrai river and another subsequent action taking place at Kallabar, imposing great loss and heavy defeat on the Ahams. Then in 1547 the Koches raised a fort at Narayanpur and Suklenmung or Garh-Gaya Raja (1539-52) entrenching himself on the bank of the Pichala river cut off the supplies for the Koches who consequently were now defeated. But this was answered by a fresh attack in 1562 during the reign of Sukhamfa or Khora Raja (1552-1603), Naranarayan inflicting an overwhelming defeat on the Ahams on which occasion the king and his chief nobles fled to Charaikhorong at Namrup and Koches in their triumphant march occupying Garh Gaon and leaving it only on the Aham king's admission of the Koch suzerainty and other things related to by the Darrang Rajvamsavali.

Conquest of the Kachari Kingdom of Hedamba.

Nothing succeeds like success, and Sukladhwaj soon set out on an expedition against the Kachari king of Hedamba, and Kavindra Patra, Rajendra Patra, Damodar karji, Meghamukudim and other officers and soldiers accompanied him. Finding them at his door, the king of Hedamba got frightened and immediately got two elephants covered with gold and another two with silver another twenty four best elephants, one vessel full of gold and another full of silver, one royal family and twelve ordinary households, and offered them all personally at the feet of the Koch king as a mark of submission. Being much pleased at this the two royal brothers of the Koch gave him assurance of safety and made some valuable presents in return. The king of Hedamba was then ordered to give Naranarayan one thousand coins of gold and seventy thousand of silver and sixty best elephants annually as his tribute, and this he gladly agreed (vs.389-404).

Introduction To Assam

Submission of the King of Manipur.

A messenger was then dispatched to the king of Manipur to ask him to make his submission, and he immediately came with a present of one thousand coins of gold, twenty thousand of silver and twenty two elephants for tendering his submission. The Koch royal brothers were glad and making him presents in return gave him assurance of safety with the condition of the king of Manipur paying an annual tribute to the Koch king of three hundred coins of gold and twenty thousand of silver and ten elephants. This being promised, they fared him well (vs.405-14).

Kingdom of Jayantiya Conquered.

Soon they proceeded against the king of Jayantiya who was killed by the Koch G-in-C with his own hands. The young prince of Jayantiya then approached Narnarayan with a present of one thousand coins of gold, ten thousand of silver some best cloth and one hundred swords to surrender. Narnarayan was overjoyed and made him some presents in return. He was then set up as the king of Jayantiya in his father's throne and was ordered to pay an annual tribute of ten thousand silver coins, seventy horses and three hundred swords. This was promised, but the princes of Jayantiya prayed for permission to strike coins in his own name. This was partially granted with the provision that he might mint coins simply in the name of Jayantiya Nagar and to this the prince readily agreed (vs.415-20). This finds confirmation from the fact that no ruler of Jayantiya is known to have minted any coins in their names until 1731; and all the coins of earlier date as most of the later ones appear minted with the name of Jayantiya on them, (Gait,H.A.P.53).

Kingdom of Tipperah Conquered.

After this, a Koch army of 40,000 soldiers marched

Introduction To Assam

against the kingdom of Tipperah and inflicted a heavy defeat with loss of life including that of the reigning king. Then prince Visal approached Narnarayan with one hundred coins of gold and ten thousand of silver, as also thirty horses skilled in the use of war and tendered submission on behalf of the people of Tipperah. He was then set up as the ruler of Tipperah and ordered to pay an annual tribute of nine thousand gold coins only. This having promised he bade leave of the Koch king with his presents in return. (vs. 421-30). This is corroborated by an Aham chronicle. Sir Gait seems to have committed two mistakes in translating the relevant portion of the Assamese text of this Koch family history saying that the son of the late king of Tipperah was set up as king and that ten thousand rupees etc. was to be paid as tribute. The latter was the present ("bhenty") offered by the late king's brother and it was the late Jayantiya king's son who was set up in his father's place (H. A., P. 53).

Submission by the King of Khairam (Khasi State).

The ruler of Khairam (the Khasi) state having reports of this triumphant march of the Koch king and apprehending an attack, personally came to tender his submission in advance making a present of thirty horses, forty elephants all having tusks, forty thousand coins of silver and ten hundred of gold, and so forth. The king of Khairam was received affectionately by Narnarayan who ordered the former to pay him an annual tribute of nine hundred coins of gold and fifteen thousand of silver, thirty elephants skilled in the use of battle and fifty best horses. Having promised this, the king of Khairam begged of Narnarayan to strike coins in his own name as the prince of Tippera asked. This too was partially granted by ordering that he must strike but they must be minted in the name of

Introduction To Assam

Malladew, the Koch king. (vs. 432-42). Gait names this ruler of Khairam, Viryavanta.

Subjugation of the Kingdom of Dimaruwa.

Thence, they are said to have entered the country of Dimaruwa (in central Assam) where a king of the line of king Mrigakanka ruled. A battle ensued resulting in the defeat of the local king who was taken captive and was subsequently released on his undertaking to pay an annual tribute of seven thousand rupees. (vs.444-63) Gait names this king of Dimaruwa Pantheswar; and if Mrigakanka really refers to Bhaskarvarma's father Susthita or Susthira Varma alias Mriganka then he might be a descendent of Bhaskar's elder brother, Supratisthita varma, for Bhaskar perhaps remained a confirmed bachelor.

Final Submission by the King of Sylhet.

Then the Koch king sent a messenger to the king of Sylhet ("chirath") asking whether he too would acknowledge Narnarayan's suzeranity; but he made a challenge instead. A fierce battle was fought for three days after which Chilarai the Koch general killed ten millions of the enemy soldiers, the king not excluded. Then Asirai, the brother of the late king approached Narnarayan with a present of one hundred elephants, one hundred and eighty horses, thirty million rupees and ten thousand gold coins making his submission. Asirai was then set up as the king of Sylhet on his promising an annual tribute of a hundred elephants two hundred horses, three hundred thousand rupees and ten thousand gold coins to be rendered to Narnarayan. (vs.465-89). Muhammadan rule may have begun before this in Sylhet but it might remain independent in the meanwhile for the troubles the Muhammadans had elsewhere.

**War And Peace With Gauda King Making the
Ganges the Common Boundary.**

Later on the Koch general Samgram Simha encountered with the then king of Gauda; but it was no passing of the knife through butter, as in other cases. A terrible battle ensued which lasted continuously for ten days, terminating with defeat of the Koch army and Chilarai himself being taken prisoner. After some time not only had he been unconditionally released but the kingdom was amicably divided between the two with the Ganges as the boundary line (vs.494-534). It is supported by the Aham chronicles, but the Muhammadans records have no direct reference to this war. But according to Riyaz-us-Salatin (Abdus Salam's translation p, 151), Sulaiman kararani who ruled in Bengal from 1563 to 1572, marched for conquest of the Koch capital in 1568 with Kalapahar, the Brahman renegade, as his general; and after conquering the outlying parts he was on the point of besieging the capital when he had suddenly to leave for Orissa. This too has no confirmation from the Koch or Aham chronicles save that the redoubtable renegade is still alive in the local traditions as the destroyer of the Hindu temples and images mainly at Kamakhya and Hajo.

**Rebuilding the Khamakhya Temple And its
Inscription Dated 1565 A.C.**

On return from Gauda, Chilarai engaged himself in re-building the temple of Kamakhya which the Muhammadans damaged and immediately ordered Meghamukdum to employ his men to do the needful. It is said that since the stone work did not stand, it was built by bricks every piece being baked in ghee. The work was thus completed in six months' time and by a formal ceremony the temple was dedicated to the goddess by offering a hundred thousand sacrifices. Then

Introduction To Assam

they left the place making all necessary arrangements for the upkeep of the temple and leaving their own stone images with an inscription which reads as follows (vs.535-55) :—

"Lokanugraha-karakah karunaya prarthodhanur-
vidyah ;
Danenapi dadhichikarnasadriso maryyadayam-
bhonidhi,
Nanasastravicharacharucharitah kandarparupoj-
jvalah ;
Kamakhyacharanarchakovijayate Sri Mallade-
vonripah,
Prasadamadriduhituscharamaravinda ;
Bhaktiya karotudanujo vara Nila sailye,
Sri Sukladeva imamullasitopalena ;
Sake turangagajavedasasankasamkhye,
Tasyatva priyasodarah prithujasavtendra maulis-
thali ;
Manikyam bhajamana kalpavitapi Nilachale-
manjulam,
Prasadam muninagavedasasabhrit sake silaraji-
bhih ;
Devi bhaktimatamvaro rachittavan Sri Suklapur-
vadhvajah.

Narnarayan, an Assamese Vikramaditya.

Undoubtedly the two royal Koch brothers were great patrons of learning so-much-so that their regal court may fittingly be compared with that of king Vikramaditya. The Vamsawali hits on this point too (vs.604-12) :—

"Gauda Kamarupa jata pandit achhila,
Samastake ani satra dewal patila
Suniyo Purushuttama Bhattacharyya dvija ;
Kariyoka Ratnamala Vyakarnar vija

Introduction To Assam

*Suniyoka ajna mora Ram Saraswati ;
Bharatar pal tumi kariyo samprati,
Aru achhe sapta kanda Ramayana jata ;
Slovak bhangia pad kariyo samprata,
Ashtadas Puranar kariyoka pad ; ..
Ake suni naralok paiba parampad,
Suniyo Sankar tumi Bhakta Mahajan ;
Barhay skandhar pad kara nivandhan,
Harir bhaktik tumi kariyo prachar ;
Hari bhasi nare hauka samsarar par, ..
Suniyo Sridhar tumi mor vakya dhara ;
Jyotishak bhangia tumi Sadhya khanda kara,
Bakul kayastha tumi dhanga Lilawati ;
Alpate bujay jen Kayesthe samprati,
Deva Damodar adi santa barhajan ;
Dharma prakasila save sravankirttan. .*

Thus Narnarayan of the latter half of the sixteenth century reminds us of Bhaskar varma ahead of him by nearly a thousand years about whom the great Chinese pilgrim said—"His Majesty was a lover of learning and his subjects followed his example; men of abilities came from far to study here"....(Watter's Hluen Tsiang, vol. II, P. 186).

Narnarayan, Also an Assamese Asoka

Not only this, Malladew has a claim to be compared with the great Indian king, Asoka. From the same source we have this suggestion (vs.558-64):—

*"Ali math pukhuri karaila thai thai ;
Jata vriksha rowailanta adi anta nai,
Annasala pantsala karai dese dese ;
Bhojana karanta tate atithi niseshe,
Nahike durzhiksha marka mari ;
Sasya matsya jai nitante barhi,
Prajara piriti barhay nawa ;*

Introduction To Assam

*Dine dine vridddhi rang utsawa,
Vipra save kare vedak dhvani ;
Drivajne thakay grahak gani,
Vaishnave thakay namak dhari :
Nate bhate thake kirttan kari,
Javane Farsi kare Koran ;
Swadharmat pare nischinte an,
Vanijaru gane vanijya kare ;
Krisakar nite ananda chare,
Raja nite kare mahotsawa ;
Ehi mate barhe ananda nawa."*

Besides the Gohain Kamal Ali and its neighbouring tanks, which still exist in parts, Narnarayan got many similar works done as planting trees, building inns and temples which the above passage describes. After the conquest of Dimaruwa he is said to have straightened the course of the Brahmaputra which formerly flowed past Hajo by cutting a channel (D.R.Vamsawali, vs. 447-51) and this stream of the river is said to have been dried up in 1636 A.C. by Muhammandan chronicles.

Narnarayan's Mint And Coins

Sir Gait's Note on some coins of the Koch kings (J.A.S.B., Pt. I, 1895) and Stapleton's Contributions to the History and Ethnography of N.E. India, J.A.S.B., 1910, p. 153) clearly show that Narnarayan had a mint and coins with his name inscribed on them and dated equivalent to 1555 A.D. have been found. The latter also points out that his coins were modelled on those of Hussain Shah whose line became extinct in 1538. A coin of Parikshit Narnarayan (1603-13) dated equivalent to—1603 A.C. has also been discovered

An English Sojourner's Account of Koch Kingdom.

An English sojourner, Ralph Fitch, who visited the

Koch kingdom during the time of Malla and Sukla, remarks:—"I went from Bengala into the country of Couch or Quichen which lies 25 days' journey northwards from Tanda. The king is a Gentile, his name is Suckel Counse; his country is great and lieth not far from Cauchin China; for they say they have pepper from thence. The port is called Cacchegate.... Here they have much silk and musk, and cloths made of cotton.... There they be all Gentiles and they will kill nothing. They have hospitals for sheep, goat, dogs, cats, blrds and for all living creatures. When they be old and lame they keep them until they die." (Quoted by Gait, H.A. pp. 60-61).

**Emperor Akbar's Friendship With Narnarayan,
Their Concerted Attack of Gauda**

To return to their war and victories once more. After the first of his return, the mother of the ruler of Gauda died and two years from thence, the great Emperor, Akbar sent Narnarayan a letter through a mendicant intimating his intention to be friends with him and to attack Gauda from each of their sides concertedly, just as Emperor Harshvardhan became friends With Bhaskar nearly a thousand years back, to attack the kingdom of Sasanka. Akbar also plainly informed NarNarayan that the newly acquired territory of Gauda would be equally divided between them. To this, the royal Koch brothers readily responded and agreed. Being encouraged by this, Akbar sent a large army led by Mansingha. Nawrangsa, the *patshah* of Gauda, being unable to stand this combined assault, fled to the country of Flinga; and the Mughals and Koches divided Gauda between them once more making the Ganges their common boundary (vs. 565-84). According to the *Ain-i-Akbari*, Narnarayan "renewed his demonstration of obedience to the Imperial throne" in 1578.

Introduction To Assam

Raghudew (1581-1603) And Lakshmi Narayan (1584-1622) Dividing the Kingdom of Narnarayan at the Sonkoh

Just before their return from this second battle of Gauda, the messenger informed Chilaral of a son being born to him. When he was about to return he fell ill and died on the bank of the Ganges of an attack of small-pox (vs. 585-92). Chilaral's son was named Rughudew. Soon after, a son was born also to Narnarayan being named Lakshmi Narayan. Rughudew came to Barnagar near which he established a town, Ghilajaypur, settled himself with his followers and made himself a king there. It is said that he married as many as one hundred and twenty wives by whom he had as many as eighteen sons whose names are described fully. Seeing that he would not turn up, his uncle Narnarayan divided his kingdom between his son and nephew, declaring the Sonkoh as the common boundary, Rughudew's kingdom on the east being called Koch Hajo and that of Parikshit Narayan on the west being name Kochbehar (vs. 627-66). Narnarayan died meanwhile in 1584 which date is given in the Vamsawali by Prasiddha Narayan and in the History of Assam by Gunabhiram. Gait, while accepting this date records his doubt and thinks that this may possibly be three years later since the dates on the coins of Lakshmi Narayan and Raghudew are given as 1587 and 1588 respectively. (H.A., Footnote, p. 57). But this does not so much convince, since the coins might be struck at any time, and Raghudew, as a matter of fact, became independent even during Narnarayan's reign.

Raghu's Sons Parikshit (1603-16) and Balli Alias Dharma Narayan (1606-37)

Subsequently it appears that the capital city of

Introduction To Assam

Raghudew was established at Vijaypur. Besides the eighteen sons he had several daughters. He ruled for thirty two years, and was succeeded by his eldest son Parikshit Narayan (1603-13). For some reason he shifted his capital to the bank of Brahmaputra near Sri Ghat at Pendunath and minted gold coins in his name. Unfortunately on his encroaching on Bahir-bandh, possibly beyond the Sonkoh, he was encountered by Lakshmi Narayan the latter meeting with serious reverses and losing his brother. In order to avenge this, Lakshmi Narayan set out for Delhi and sought help from Emperor Jehangir (1605-27). The Padishah namah and also the Baharistan-i-Ghaibi, recording the happenings of the reign of Jehangir (quoted by Gait) show that Nawab Islam Khan of Dacca, at the request of Lakshmi Narayan in 1612, but mainly at the instigation of Raghunath, ruler of Shushang, near Karaihari and also prompted by his own jealousy, ordered Mukarram Khan, to attack Parikshit's kingdom with 300 elephants; 6,000 horses; 10,000 to 12,000 foot, and 400 to 500 warships. It was not as easy as the Nawab thought to humble Parikshit, but the different powers making a combined assault at least defeated him and took him a prisoner to Delhi. His kingdom up to the Barnadi was to be now annexed to the Empire of Jahangir; but the Koches were not prepared to accept Mughal domination and so with the help of the Ahams they expelled the Muhammadans. Parikshit died on his way home at the sacred Prayag (Allahabad). He was succeeded by his brother Bali Narayan alias Dharma-narayan (1616-87) who now removed his capital to Darrang, and wanted to avenge this with the help of the Aham king Susengpha or Burha Raja (Pratap singh 1603-41). Here he was successful and the Mughals who evidently occupied the land were driven beyond the Karatoya (vs. 684-794). Here the Vamsawali abruptly stops concluding:—

Introduction To Assam

*"Asameo khedi jai Bangalak lag pai ..
Karilanta ran dhumajay ;
Gosanir prasadat Asamar unamat,
Bangalar sainya bhalla kshay.
Bangaleo bhanga nai Thana eri palal gai,
Kartiya Gangar haila par ;
Asameo knedi jai karatoya Ganga pai,
Knanda sav bhuila barambar.
Khanda puti sima kari Asam asila firi,*

**Raghu's Dominions included East Mymensingh and
Lakshmi Narayan's Kingdom embraced
Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur, Rungpur and Kochbehar
The latter's great Army.**

Dr. Wise's *On the Bara Bhuyas of Eastern Bengal* (J.A.S.B., 1874, p, 213) and Blochmann's translation of the *Ain* (p,343) refer to an invasion, not confirmed by any local accounts or tradition, of Raghu's dominions, extending southwards from the present Goalpara boundary and the tracts between the old course of the Brahmaputra and the Garo hills, now covering East Mymensingh by an Afghan named Isa khan. The invader is said to have conquered the land up to Rangamati to the north east of Dhubri on the bank of the Brahmaputra. He rebuilt the temple of Manikut or Rayagriva at Hajo which was destroyed by the Brahman renegade, mentioned elsewhere, in 1583 A.C. as its inscription is dated. Lakshmi Narayan's kingdom embraced Rangpur, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and Kochbehar. The Akbar Namah says that Lakshminarayan had "4,000 horses and 200,000 infantry 700 elephant and 1,000 ships. His country is 200 kos long and from 100 to 40 kos broad, extending in the east to the Brahmaputra, in the north to Tibet, in the south to Ghoraghat and in the west to Tirhut." He is said to have

given a daughter in marriage to Raja Man Singh, Governor of Bengal in 1597. One Sikh chronicle is known mentioning Man Singh's death as having occurred by the hand of a girl of Kamarupa, his mistress, when the governor intended to make an invasion of Kamarupa. (My article "*Dhubur Itivritta*", Banhi, vol. XVII, no. 12; also my poem "*Mansimhar Samadhi*", Assam Sahitya Sabha Patrika, 1928). At any rate the Koch kingdom was not to stay long. Ball or Dharma-narayan and his two sons were killed in a fresh Muhammadan expedition in 1637, and was succeeded by his son Sundar Narayan who was practically an officer of the Ahom king. Lakshminarayan's son Pran Narayan (1633-66) who succeeded his uncle Vir Narayan (1622-33) made an attempt to throw off the Muhammadan yoke in 1658, and again about 1662; but it could not be effective.

**The Sixth, Seventh and Eight Muhammadan
Invasions of Kamarupa in 1527, 1531 and 1532
respectively frustrated**

The rise of the Ahom power in the east and their gradual extension to the west of Saumar by defeating the Chutiyas and Barabhuys and their pushing the Kacharies first to the west of the Dikhau and then of the Dhansiri and compelling them to change their capital from Dimapur to Maibong have already been mentioned. We have also referred to the frustration of the Muhammadan invasions in 1206, 1227, 1257, 1337 of the western Kamarupa Ratna and Kama pithas; and now after the destruction of Kamata by the treachery of Hussain Shah in 1498, their hold over that part did not last much beyond 1602, A.C. (para. 86 above). The first three Muhammadan invasions of the Ahom kingdom and the sixth and seventh of the old kingdom of Kamarupa, occurred in 1527, 1531 and 1587 during the

Introduction To Assam

reign of Suhung Mung or the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539) under their commanders one Vazir and another Turbak.

The Riyazus salatin (quoted by Gait) makes a combined reference to these and their former invasions. "After having reduced the Rajas of the districts as far as Orissa, Hussain took tribute from them. After this he resolved to invade the kingdom of Assam in the north-east of Bengal, and he set out with a large army of a foot and numerous fleet and entered the kingdom and subdued it as far as Kamrup and Kamata and other districts. The Raja of the country unable to withstand withdrew to the mountains. Sultan Hussain left his son with a strong army in Assam to complete the settlement of the country and returned victoriously to Bengal. After, the return of the Sultan the prince pacified and guarded the conquered country; but when the rains set in and the roads were closed the Raja issued with his men from the hills, surrounded the prince and cut off his supplies. In a short time they were all killed."

Booty of These Wars And Invention of Gun Powder by Ahams

In the invasion of 1527 a Muhammadan commander, Bit Malik was killed at Khagarljan (Nagaon) and fifty horses and many canons and guns were captured from the Muhammadans; while in the one of 1432, April, both Turbak and Hussain Khan were put to death, and 28 elephants, 850 horses and a large number of cannons and matchlocks along with gold silver and other boots were obtained and the Muhammadan fugitives were driven as far as the Karatoya. Those brought as prisoners were settled in different parts of the country and took to different occupations (Gait, H. A. pp. 92-95). The use of firearms seems to date from

Introduction To Assam

after this war ; for Tavernier in connexion with Mirjumlas invasion in 1663, note about the Ahams :—

"It is thought that these were the people that formerly invented gunpowder ; which spread itself from Assam to Pegu and from Pegu to China, from when the invention has been attributed to the Chinese. However, certain it is that Mirjumla brought from thence several pieces of cannon which were all iron guns, and store of excellent powder both made in the country. The powder is round and small like ours, and of excellent quality." (Tavernier, London, 1678, Pt. II, Bk. III, p. 187).

Some Social And Political Activities of Suhungmung (1497-1539) And Suklenmung (1539-52).

Suklenmung (1539-52) succeeded his father and having made his capital at Garhgaon became known as Garhgayan Raja since. It is his father who during a reign of forty-two years made improvement of the country all round, subjugated the Chutiyas and the Nagas and killing Detsung, occupied the Kachari dominions north of the Kalang. Both the Kacharis and the Ahams are reported to have made use of cannons in this decisive fight. The people were divided into clans and artisans were imported from the Chutiya territories and other places. It is in his reign that the great Vaishnavite movement of Sankardew made some headway in the Ahom countries and the Saka era was used; and also the firearms was introduced. In the reign of his son, besides the establishment of capital at Garhgaon, the tank there was excavated and the Naga Ali (road) was constructed from Bar Ali to the Naga hills. Besides, Suklenmung was the first Ahma king to strike coins. Hostilities with the Koch, construction of the Gohain Kamal road and fortification of the Koch army at Narayanpur, occurred during the king's reign.

Introduction To Assam

Some Social And Political Aspects of Sukhamfa's Reign (1552-1603) And The Ninth Muhammadan Invasion in 1568 in The Koch Dominions.

His son Sukhamfa alias (Lame king) Khora Raja (1552-1603) succeeded Suklenmung, and it is in this king's reign that the Koches under Chilarai made another invasion of an Ahma kingdom in 1562 compelling Sukhamfa to sue for peace, which was granted on such conditions as the acknowledgement of the Koch supremacy, the cession of a considerable tract of country on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, and the payment of some war indemnity etc. But about 1564 peace was concluded with the Koches on friendly terms. The years 1563 and 1572 A.C. saw Chutiya raids into Namrup, Tipam and such places, but they were subdued. In 1576 the Nara Raja of Mungkang made an expedition against the Ahams but were driven away. During his reign in 1568 the ninth Muhammadan invasion under the generalship the Brahman renegade took place as already mentioned, but it did not affect the Aham kingdom. The propagation of Valshnavism still continued and some of the highest of Ahma officials now embraced this faith, and many religious institutions (satras) were established.

Accession of Susengfa Alias Pratapsingh (1603-41) to The Throne, His Matrimonial Alliances With Jayantiya And Koch King, Compromise With The Kachari King And The Tenth Invasion (1615 A.C.) of Muhammadans

Susenfa, alias Pratap Singh, and nicknamed Burah Raja (1603-41), succeeded his father Sukhamfa who died after a reign of fifty-one years. About 1606 A.C. he married a princess of Jasa Manik, the Jayantiya king, and escorted the princess from Jayantiyapur through the Kachari territories. Pratap Narayan, the

Introduction To Assam

Kachari king resented this, and hostilities soon began culminating in defeat of the Ahom army in several actions and the death of Sundar Gohain and the flight of the rest in the Ahom fort at Raha. Susengfa, soon anticipating a fresh Muhammadan invasion took a compromising attitude and pacified the Kachari king by giving Ahom princes in marriage to him. In 1608 Susengfa married Mangaldahl, the daughter of Parikshit, the Koch king; and in 1615, after the death of Parikshit his brother Balli alias Dharma Narayan was supported by Susengfa. Both the *Padishah namah* (11. p. 64 and the *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* confirm these accounts of the Ahom chronicles. In the meantime a Muhammadan trader was murdered near Kallabar and his two boats looted on the suspicion that he was a spy. All this culminated in the tenth Muhammadan invasion of eastern Kamarupa or Assam in 1615 dispatched with more than ten thousand horse and foot and four hundred large ships (Gait, H.A., pp. 107-08). They were encountered by the Ahoms at the mouth of the Bharali. This resulted in total defeat of the Muhammadans and the account of their loss is given by the *Baharistani-ghaibi* as 5000 Muhammadans killed, 9000 captured and 3000 fled of which about 200 were rescued by a relief expedition sent from Hajo. (quoted by Gait, in p. 108 footnote). Quasim Khan, the Governor of Bengal was deposed, according to the *Padishah namah* for his defeat of the Muhammadans.

Aggressive Part Taken by Susengfa Against Balinayan And Others in 1617, And The Eleventh Muhammadan Invasion in 1619 Frustrated.

Now in November 1617, Susenfa accompanied by Balli Narayan and other chiefs, took an aggressive part and proceeded towards the west to recover the Koch territories which the Muhammadans now occupied.

Introduction To Assam

Among the chiefs who made their submission to Susengfa was the prince of Dimaruwa whose ancestor Pantheswar, formerly a tributary chief of the Kachari's king but left owing to the latter's oppression of him and joined Nar Narayan who now established Pantheswar on the Jayantiya frontier as a ruler over about 18,000 subjects. Now, these aggressors fortified themselves at Pandu and attacked the Muhammadans who being inflicted a defeat at Agianthuti retreated to Hajo where they were reinforced by fresh troops from Dacca. But they made an ill-advised and unsuccessful attack there so that the aggressors were obliged to retreat to Srighat. In September 1619, the Muhammadans made a fresh attack and besieged Balinarayan in his fort, who assisted by an Ahom force fought with the Muhammadans for six weeks, and in the end the Muhammadans were defeated a large number of them being killed and others put to flight to Hajo, "leaving ten cannon, fifty guns and other weapons as well as some horses, buffaloes and cattle in the hand of the Ahams." (Ib. pp. 110).

The Twelfth And Thirteenth Muhammadan Attacks in 1635, And The Enemies Rooted Out of The Country

In 1635 the twelfth Muhammadan invasion began. They were encountered by the Ahams near the Bharali river and were defeated. Susengfa once more with the help of Dimaruwa Raja and other chiefs took the offensive rooted the enemies out of many of their forts, and at last attacked them at Hajo where the Muhammadans were defeated in several actions and in one of these the enemies "lost 360 cannon and guns as well as other stores." (Ib, p. 112). The Muhammadan army was again reinforced from Dacca by "one thousand matchlock men . . . together with two hundred and

Introduction To Assam

ten war sloops and brats and a large supply of ammunition weapons and money." (Ib., p. 113). The first action was fought a little west of Pandu and after a severe fight the Ahams were defeated "with the loss of four ships and a few cannon", and subsequently expelled from Agiathuti and then from Srighat. But a re-inforcement sent from the Aham capital not only encouraged them but "the same night the Ahams with nearly five hundred ships attacked the hostile fleet and gained a decisive victory . . . and the greater part of the Muhammadan) fleet fell into the hands of the victory." The rest of the army were compelled to surrender.

The Fourteenth Invasion in 1637, And Treaty Concluded About 1638.

In 1637, a Muhammadan army, said to be accompanied by the Koch prince Pran Narayan, made another attack on the Ahams at Yogighopa and other places and defeated them, both by land and fleet, the latter running short of ammunition. The victors gradually advanced to Pandu and other places, killed Bali Narayan and his two sons and attempted to consolidate their rule on the west of the Barnadi. In 1638, a detachment of Muhammadan army accompanied by the Koch Raja Pran Narayan ascended the Bharali. Where they were stopped and compelled to retreat to Gauhati

Some Social Aspects of Susenfa's Reign

Both the parties being now tired of war, a treaty was made under which Bar Nadi on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and Asurar Ali on the south, were fixed as the boundary between the Aham and the Muhammadan territories and they remained so far the next twenty years. Meanwhile, Sunsengfa died in 1641

Introduction To Assam

after a reign of 38 years. Though too engaged in wars to find time for any internal organization, he made many embankments and roads and excavated tanks. The Bhuyans who settled themselves on the north bank of the Brahmaputra between the Bharali and the Suvansiri rivers, discontinued payment of tribute since Chilarais invasions and Susenfa punished their ring-leader Uday in 1623. He took census of his people and divided people into clans in sites where it was not already done. Besides this, other works for peace were carried on as before.

King Jaydhvaj (1648-63) Occupies The Whole Brahmaputra Valley And Bengal as Far as Dacca

Susenfa was succeeded by his son Suramfa alias (deposed king) Bhaga Raja (1641-44) and the latter by his younger brother Sutyinfa alias (crooked king) Kekora Raja or (Sick king) Kariya Raja (1644-48). They were naturally weak kings and each was deposed by the Aham nobles, and Sutamala alias (Fugitive king) Bhagania Raja or Jaydhvaj Simha (1648-63) succeeded them to the throne. In 1658 the Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahan fell ill and both the Koch king Prannarayan, and the Aham king Jayadhawaj tried to avail themselves of this opportunity. The former did his best to throw off this Muhammadan yoke and made raids into Goalpara and the latter set out with a strong army to Gauhati only to find the Muhammadan Faujadar flying to Dacca leaving him in possession of "twenty cannon and a number of horses, guns etc." which in the hot flight they left. Pran Narayan proposed friendly alliance with the Ahams against the Muhammadans ; but it was forthwith rejected on reviewing his past conduct. So the Ahams marched against the Koches and above them across the Sonkos and became masters of the whole of the Brahmaputra valley. According to

Introduction To Assam

the Alamgirnamah (quoted by Gait) the Ahams also "plundered and laid waste the country to the south of it (the Brahmaputra valley) almost as far as Dacca itself." (H. A. P. 128). Here they were not opposed by the Muhammadans for nearly three years.

Mirjumla Sets Out on January 4, 1662, in The Fifteenth Muhammadan Invasion

On the flight of prince Shuja to Arakan, Mirjumla was made the Viceroy of Bengal and he presently set out against Pran Narayan only to find the latter flying to Bhutan. Then on January 4, 1662, he led an expedition against the Ahams. The Aham chronicles record this force of Mirjumla as twelve thousand horse and thirty thousand foot; and the Muhammadan historians narrate that Mirjumla's army at Garhgaon consisted of "12,000 horse and numerous foot" (quoted by Gait) which practically are identical Statements. It was a grand preparation on the side of the Muhammadans and we quote Gait (H. A., pp 129-30, and footnote p. 130) on this point.

Portuguese And Other European Officers in-Charge of Mir-Jumla's Fleet up The Brahmaputra

"Mir Jumla now divided his army into two divisions one of which marched up the south bank of the Brahmaputra while he himself with the main body crossed the Monas by a bridge of boat and advanced along the north bank. The fleet kept pace with the army. It comprised a number of ghrabs, or large vessels carrying about fourteen guns and about fifty or sixty men, each of which was in tow of four Kosahs or lighter boats propelled by oars. Most of the ghrabs were in charge of European officers amongst whom portugese predominated. (An interesting account of

Introduction To Assam

the experiences of Dutchman who accompanied the expedition is given in *The Loss of the Ter Schelling* which has been reproduced in a work styled *Tales of Shipwrecks and Adventures at Sea*. (London, 2nd Edn. 1852, p. 705). A short history of the invasion will also be found in an old work entitled, *Particular Events, or the most Considerable Passage after the war of five years or there-about in the Empire of the Great Mogul*, (Tom II, by Mons. F. Bernier, London, 1671). The total Number of vessels of all kinds was between three or four hundred."

Mir Jumla's Temporary Occupation of Garhgaon on March 17, 1662 A.C.

The Ahams had several reverses in this invasion by land and by water. Their naval defeat is not described in the Aham chronicles, but some of these make a reference to this fact stating that when Jaydhwaj gave orders of attack on the Muhammadan fleet, the Deodhais (the Aham priests) declared the omens unfavourable by testing the legs of the fowls that was their wont; while yet others in subsequent references describe the king as being informed of the defeat of his land and naval forces. But the Dutch author of *The Loss of the Ter Schelling* and the Muhammadan writers are eloquent on this point. At any rate, Mir Jumla entered the Aham capital at Garhgaon on March 17, 1662.

Wealth Seized at Garhgaon With Arms And Ammunition

"Eighty two elephants and nearly three lakhs of rupees worth of gold and silver were found at Garhgaon and also about 170 store houses each containing from one to ten thousand maunds of rice. During the whole

Introduction To Assam

expedition the Muhammadans had taken six hundred and seventy five cannon including one ('Bartop') which threw balls weighing more than two hundred pounds, about 9,000 matchlocks and other guns, a large quantity of gun-powder, saltpetre, iron shields, sulphur and lead and more than a thousand ships, many of which accomodated from sixty to eighty sailors. It is said that Mir Jumla opened a main at Garhgaon and caused money to be struck there in the name of the Delhi Emperor (Gait, H. A., pp. 134).

Peace Terms And The Treaty of The Ahams With The Muhammadans on 9th January, 1663.

With the advent of the rains the Ahams began to attack the Muhammadans who felt it increasingly difficult to retain their outposts many of which were now withdrawn. The Ahams began to re-occupy their territories and Jaydhwaj who was a fugitive at Namrup now came to the Salaguri near Garhgaon. Peace negotiations were now opened. The fathiyah-i-Ibriyah states (quoted by Gait) that Mir Jumla demanded the cession of all the country up to Garhgaon, the payment of 500 elephants and 300,000 tolas of gold and silver, a daughter of the king for the Imperial harem and an annual tribute of fifty elephants. The negotiations broke and the Ahams started assaults on Garhgaon itself to re-occupy it. Thus, Mir Jumla was compelled to agree to the peace terms now slightly changed namely Jaydhwaj singh to send a daughter to the Imperial Harem, twenty thousand tolas of gold, six times this quantity of silver and forty elephants to be made over at once or three hundred thousand tolas of silver and ninety elephants to be supplied within twelve months, six sons of the chief nobles to be made over as hostages pending compliance with the last mentioned condition ; twenty elephants to be supplied annually ; the country

Introduction To Assam

west of the Bharali river on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and of the Kalang on the south to be ceded to the Emperor of Delhi; all prisoners and the family of the Badull Phukan to be given up. The treaty was thus concluded on January 9, 1663, when Mir Jumla and his army returned to Bengal.

Other Historians State Mir Jumla Was Driven Out by The Ahams

Sir Gait presumes (H. A., footnote, p. 138) that the girl mentioned in the first condition was the one whose marriage to prince Muhammad Azam in 1663 with a dowry of Rs. 1,80,000 is mentioned in the *Masir-i-Alamgiri* (Edn. Bibl. Ind. p. 73). Further, other historians as Rai Gunabhiram Barua Bahadur, Robinson and even Bernier, the author of "Particular Events on the most Considerable Passages after the war of five years on these about in the "Empire of the Great Mogul" does not confirm this fact of a treaty with Mir Jumla, but mentions that Mir Jumla was driven out of Assam and he died on March, 30, 1663. on his way to Dacca.

Some Social Aspects of The Reign of Jaydhwaj as Compared With Those of Buddhiswarga Narayan (1603-41)

Nor did Jaydhwaj long survive. He died in November 1663. His great predecessor Buddhi Swarga Narayan on Susengfa (1603-41) took the earliest opportunity (1623 A.C.) to break the power of the Bhuyans for ever and at the instigation of the Brahmans who managed to have had immense influence over him not only to get the Siva temples built at Dergaon and Viswanath, and land, grants and other gifts made in favour of Brahmans (inspite of the king himself still adhering to the worship of his tribal god

Introduction To Assam

Somdeo with the help of the Deodhais), but also to get the great Vaishnava preachers much persecuted and even some of them put to death, though on one occasion he also persecuted the Brahmans themselves and got many of them killed, being angry with them for his son's death occurring soon after he distributed valuable gifts to the Brahmans to prevent the disaster as advised. Jaydhwaj followed Pratap Singh in allowing himself to be ruled by the Brahmans to persecute and even put to death the great propagators of Vaishnavism. It is said that Jaydhwaj himself later on embraced Brahmanism and became a disciple of Pathel Gosain of Kuruabahi or Niranjan Bapu whom he established as the first preceptor of the Auniati Satra at Majuli. He is also said to have sent for Banamali Gosain of Kochbehar and established him as a preceptor at Jakhatabandha. The Ahom language which continued till the reign of Pratap Singh as the medium of conversation between the king and his nobles while Hindus were appointed as envoys (Vairagis and katakis) might have gradually become superseded by the Assamese. Jaydhwaj though so badly perturbed by the invasion yet constructed many public works such as the Seoni All, Bhomoraguri All and dug the Bhatlapara tank.

Shahabuddin's Account of Assam in 1663; Gold Carrying Rivers, Currency And Revenue System, Gun-Powder Etc.

Shahabuddin, a Muhammadan writer who accompanied Mr. Jumla, leaves an account of Assam (Translated by Prof. Jadunathsarkar in the Journal of the Behar and Orissa Reserch Society, vol 1.P, 179) which throws much light on the contemporary history of the country. He writes; "Gold is washed from the sand of the Brahmaputra. Ten to twelve thousand Assamese are engaged in this employment and they pay to the

Introduction To Assam

Raja's government one tola of gold per head per year. It is said that gold can be procured from the sand at all places on the bank of the Brahmaputra; but the only people who know how to gather it are the Assamese. The currency of this kingdom consists of coins, rupees and gold coins stamped with the stamp of the Raja. Copper coins are not current. Silver copper and tin are also obtained in the hills. If this country were administered like the Imperial dominions, it is very likely that forty to forty five lakhs of rupees would be collected from the revenue paid by the raiyats, the price of elephants caught in the jungles and other sources. It is not the custom here to take any land from the cultivators; but in every house one man out of three has to render service to the Raja locks and bachadar artillery and show great skill in this craft. They make first rate gunpowder. The original inhabitants of the country are of two races the Assamese (Ahams) and the Kalita. In all things the latter are superior to the former; but in performing difficult tasks and making a firm stand in battle the opposite is the case.

The Burial Custom of The Ahams

"The common people bury their dead with some of the property of the deceased. The chiefs build vaults for their dead and place there in the wives and servants of the deceased, after killing them, together with necessary articles for a few years including various kinds of gold and silver vessels, carpets, cloths and foodstuffs. They cover the head of the dead very strongly with stout poles and bury in the vault a lamp with plenty of oil and one living lamp attendant to remain engaged in the work of trimming the lamp. From the ten vaults which were opened (by the Mughals) property worth

Introduction To Assam

nearly ninety thousand rupees were recovered. One of the marvels was that from the vault of one of the queens of this country who had been buried eighty years ago, a gold betel casket was taken within which the betel leaf was still green." This statement about the burial custom of the Ahams is corroborated by Col. Dalton who says that "several mounds known to be the graves of Aham kings, were opened and were found to contain the remains of slaves and animals, also gold and silver vessels, raiment arms etc, " (quoted by Galt H. A. footnote, p. 149)

The Assamese Muhammadans

"As for the Musalmans who had been taken prisoners in former times and had chosen to marry here, their descendants act exactly in the manner of the Assamese, and having nothing of Islam except the name; their hearts are inclined for more towards mingling with the Assamese than towards association with the Muslims. The Muhammadans who had come here from Islamic lands engaged in the performance of prayer and fasting, but were forbidden to chant the call to prayer or publicly recite the "word of God."

King Chakradhwaj Singh's (1663-69) General Lachit Drives Away Muhammadans Beyond The Manah River

Jaydhwaj had no son or had, according to some Aham chronicles, two sons who were not considered fit to succeed. So the nobles sent for the Charing Raja and made him king christening him Supungmung; but he assumed the Hindu name Chakradhwaj Singh (1663-69). He was determined to drive the Muhammadans out of the country at the earliest opportunity and the fire was fanned by a strong letter from Sayid Firuz

Introduction To Assam

Khan, the then Thanadar of Gauhati, early in 1667, demanding the balance of war idemnity which was not paid even after repeated reminders. So in August, 1667, Chakradhwaj dispatched a strong army under Lachit Barphuka to wrest Gauhati from the Muhammadans. The Muhammdan out posts at Banhbari on the north bank and at Kajali on the south were captured by the Ahams at the first assault securing large number of prisoners, horses, cannon and other booty. Constructing their own forts in such places they proceeded to Gauhati and save a minor reverse on the bank of the Barnadi they had all success. And thus after a seige of two months the Ahams captured Gauhati and Pandu despite very strong defence of the Muhammadans, and a large number of prisoners and cannon and good deal of booty were won. Early in November the Muhammdan army was strongly reinforced with a number of warships. They made a fresh counter attack, but was of no avail. The Muhammadans were expelled from Agiathuti and after several defeats were driven to the bank of the Manah river, where another battle was fought and lost by the Muhammadans, reducing a large number to be made prisoners. Gauhati was then made the head quarters of the Barphukan Pandu and Srighat were strongly fortified, a survey of the country was made and a census of the population was taken, and every necessary arrangement was carried out for the administration of the reoccupied territories.

Interesting Inscriptions on The Cannon Captured From The Muhammadans

Gait's "report on the progress of Historical research in Assam" (Appendix I) gives an account of inscriptions on cannon. One inscription in an old cannon found at Silghat says in Sanskrit; "King Chakradhwaj singh having again

Introduction To Assam

destroyed the Muhammadans in battle in 1589 sak (1667 A.D.) obtained this weapon which proclaims his glory as the slayer of his enemies". An inscription in Assamese on the Kanai Barasi rock, near the Mani Karneswar temple at Gauhati; bearing the same date records the erection of an Ahma fort there after the defeat and death of Sana and Sayid Firuz. One old cannon found at Dikom bears an inscription in sanskrit referring to a victory of the Ahams in 1668 A. C. together with another inscription in Persian mentioning that the cannon was placed in charge of Sayid Ahmed ali Hussain to conquer Assam in 1074 Hijri (1663 A.C.).

Emperor Aurangzeb (1608-1707) Despatches 18,000 Cavalry, 30,000 Infantry, 15,000 Archers Under Raja Ram Singh to Conquer Assam in Feb. 1669.

The news of these reverses and losses reached Aurangzeb (1658-1707) in December, 1667. He immediately dispatched a strong Imperial army under command of Raja Ram Singh, advising it to be made stronger yet with troops of the Bengal command. Meanwhile, the Muhammadan army made an assault at Rangamati under the command of Raja Indradaman, and then at Srighat where the Muhammadans were defeated and compelled to retreat. Raja Ram Singh accompanied by Rashid Khan, the late Thanadar of Gauhati, reached Rangamati in February, 1669. The Alamgirnamah (Bible. Ind. edition, P. 1068) does not detail the strength of the Mughal army but Gait who collects it from the Aham chronicles state that the army "consisted of 18,000 cavalry and 30,000 infantry with 15000 archers from Koch Behar." The Ahams who were not yet fully prepared took recourse to delaying tactics by making enquiries of Ramsingh as to the cause of their proposed assault and when Ramsingh asked Lachit to leave off the territories

Introduction To Assam

west of the boundary line fixed by the previous treaty the latter replied, meanwhile, having completed his preparations that he would rather fight than budge an inch from their present occupied territories

Raja Ram Singh Defeated And Repulsed.

Early in April, 1669, war renewed. In the first two battles fought near Tezpur the Ahams lost, but they soon gained a naval fight and immediately drove away the Muhammadans by successful assault on their fort at Rangmahal on the opposite of Gauhati. Ramsingh was compelled to make retreat to Hajo, and the Ahams following up their success captured the Muhammadan fort at Aglathuti.

King Udayaditya's Reign (1669-73) And Eviction of The Muhammadan Invaders

Meanwhile, Chakradhwaj died and his brother Maju Gohain, christened Sunyatfa succeeded him assuming the name of Udayadityasingh (1669-73). Chakradhwaj had little leisure left for carrying out public works yet he constructed some road in his time. Before his death Raja Ram singh opened negotiations for peace and this continued till the reign of his successor. But, Ram Singh having the Mughal army meanwhile, re-inforced prepared for war and so did the Ahams. The Ahams were successful both by land and navy and consequently in March, 1671, Ram singh was compelled to retreat finally to Rangamati. Hadira on the opposite side of Goalpara, was made the Aham frontier outpost. The grandson of Balinarayan, Suryyanarayan or Chandranarayan, was made the tributary chief of Darrang and Gandharva Narayan that of Beltola. An expedition was sent now to subdue the Dablas who in the meantime made some distur-

Introduction To Assam

bances and refused to pay tribute. The Alamgirnamah mentions the duration from 1667 to 1685 as the period of Ram Singh's stay at Rangamati which was his headquarters.

King Ramdhvaj (1673-75), The Fratricide And His End

Udayaditya's brother who was a fratricide and killed his royal brother at Charidew now came to the throne being christened Suklamfa and assuming the Hindu name Ramdhawaj (1673-75) Udayaditya's reign is specially marked by the eviction of the Muhammadan invaders and by the making of a strong fortification at Gauhati. It is, also, during this period that the Ahams made their own cannon which is evidenced by one at Gauhati having an inscription saying that it was made under the orders of the Cholahara Baruwa in the reign of Udayaditya in the year corresponding to 1672 A.C. Ramdhvaj who ascended the throne in a hot bed of conspiracy, had also to pass in the same hot bed himself and through the irony of fate the hand of Debera or Lachal that made him king and for which Ramdhvaj prized him the post fo Barbaruwa on his accession to the throne also snatched away his kingship along with his life, and this took place in March, 1675.

King Gadadhar Singh (1681-96) After a Reign of Intrigues (1670-81) And The Last Muhammadan Invasion (1682-Crushed

Thus we have found that after the death of Chakradhwaj in 1670 and in a span of eleven years there came to the throne no less than seven kings, some of them like Gobar being on the throne for barely a month and none allowed to die a natural death. Availing

Introduction To Assam

themselves of this opportunity the Muhammadans re-occupied Gauhati. So when after the murder of Lara Raja (1679-81) Gadapani, christened Supatia, ascended the throne assuming the Hindu name Gadadhar Singha (1681-96) with his capital at Borkola, his first act was to reconquer Gauhati. Even at the first attack fell the Mughal forts at Banhbari and Kajali, and a great naval fight was won near the mouth of the Barnadi; the complete fleet of the enemies who fled beyond the Manah river being captured by the Ahams and a great booty of gold and silver, cannon and guns, swords and spears, elephants, horses and buffaloes being secured by the Ahams. This was the last Muhammadan war which though not recorded by the Muhammadan chronicles is eloquently described by the Aham chronicles and by three still existing descriptions one at Dikom, one in the Indian Museum and the last at Dibrugarh, to the effect :—King Gadadhar Singha having vanquished the Musalmans at Gauhati, obtained this weapon in 1604 sak. (1682 A.D.).

Gadadhar's Persecution of The Vaishnavas And Land Grants to The Temple of Umananda

Gadadhar's reign is marked not only by the crushing of the last Muhammadan invasion fixing the Manah as the common boundary but also by his persecution on his unsympathetic officers and subjects and on Vaishnava preachers. He was patron of Saktism. Gait opines : "The temple of Umananda, Peacock Island opposite Gauhati, was built under his auspices and the earliest known copper plates, recording grants of land by Ahom kings to Brahmans or Hindu temples, date from his reign". (H. A. p. 170). But a document of land grant to the temple of Umananda, discovered of late shows that Badshah Aurangzeb made land grant to this temple as early as March, 1667 A. C. and it is also

Introduction To Assam

thought in this connexion that the Koch King Raghu-dew (1581-1603) was the first who gave land grant to this temple (J. A. R. S. Vol. IX, New series Nos. 1-2 ; Jan. and April, 1942).

Inordinate Growth of The Vaishnava Power

Gait observes :—"It is impossible to justify or palliate, the brutal severity of the measures which he adopted with a view to overthrow the Vaishnava sects but there can be no doubt that the power of their priesthood was already becoming excessive ; and history of the Moamaria insurrection in later times shows that the inordinate growth of this power is not only prejudicial to progress, but may easily become menace to the safety of established institutions." (H.A. p. 170).

Gadadhar's Execution of Public Works

Time and circumstances were thus favourable for execution of public works during his reign and so we find immense progress and victories of peace belonging to this period. Not only were many roads like the Dhodar Ali, Aka Ali constructed, two stone bridges built and many tanks excavated ; but a detailed survey of the country introducing a new system of land measurement was started during Gadadhar's reign importing surveyors from Koch Behar and Bengal.

King Rudra Singha's (1696-1714) Achievements as The Greatest Ahom Monarch

Gadadhar was succeeded by his eldest son, christened Sukhrungfa but ascending the throne at Garhgaon assuming the Hindu name Rudra Singha (1696-1714). He is regarded generally as the greatest of the Ahom Kings like Akbar (1556-1605) amongst the Mughal Emperors, and like Akbar, he is said to have been

Introduction To Assam

illiterate (Gait's H.A. P. 181); but we now have specimens of one or two songs composed by him. There is no doubt that he was the most enlightened of all the Ahom monarchs up to his time. With him ceased "the isolating policy" of his predecessors and he sent envoys to visit the kingdoms of other contemporary rulers of India in order to inform himself of the progress that was going on around him. With him also ceased the persecution of the Vaishnava preachers continued by his predecessors, and he allowed Majuli (the river island) to be the head quarters for the prominent members of them. Among them the Auniati Gosain was specially honoured being recalled from his exile and made his spiritual preceptor. Ghanashyam, an artisan from Koch Behar was imported by him to supervise the brick buildings constructed at Rangpur near Sibsagar and at Charaideo. He also made many roads and great tanks as the Jaysagar tank and temples in the brick city of Rangpur, besides the masonry bridges over the Namdang and Dimau.

His Re-conquest of The Kachari Kingdom

Rudra Singha was no less a conqueror. The long period that elapsed since the last wars in which the Kacharis were subjugated by the Ahoms became gradually effaced from their memory, and this forgetfulness culminated in the assertion of independence by Tamradhwaj (1706-08). Rudra Singha ordered Maibang, the Kachari capital to be invaded; and the Barbaruwa proceeded to it by the Dhansiri Valley with over 37,000 soldiers while the Pani Phukan advanced by the Kapill valley with about 34,000 men about December, 1706. The Barbaruwa after meeting some opposition entered the Kachari capital and secured sufficient booty with one cannon and 700 guns some time after the Pani Phukan's army also joined him taking 322 prisoners and

Introduction To Assam

some booty. The king who was then at Raha ordered the Barbaruwa to proceed to Khaspur but the foul climate of the place attacked the army with illness resulting in the loss of the Barbaruwa's own life. So about the end of the March, 1707 the king was obliged to give up the idea of conquering Khasur and he called back his men who after cutting the brick fort at Maibong to ruins, erecting pillars for their victory returned leaving fortifications and a strong garrison at Demara.

His Re-conquests of The Jayantiya Kingdom

Meanwhile, the Tamradhwaj became a fugitive at Vikrampur in the plains of present Kachar and asked Ramsingha I, the king of Jayantia (1699-1708) to join him against the Ahoms. But the latter played a treacherous part and met Tamradhwaj at Baleswar and took him a captive with a view to rule both the countries. Through a Bairagi or Hindu envoy Tamradhwaj managed to appeal to Rudra Singha for forgiveness and deliverance. Rudra Singha immediately ordered the officer in charge at the Jagi outpost to ask Ramsingha through his tributary chief of Gobha, to set Tamradhwaj free. On his refusal Rudra Singha stopped the supply of the Jayantiyas by closing the market at Gobha and despatched early in December, 1707, an army of 43,000 men in command of the Babaruwa en route the Kapili valley and the Kachari country and a similar army under the Barphukan enroute Godha and the Jayantiya hills when each army of the Ahoms approached him by two different routes he left all preparations of war and surrendered to the Barbauwa, and the Barphukan also soon joined him.

His Annexation of Kachari and Jayantiya Kings

Rudra Singha then ordered the two royal captives to be taken to him each through his own country along

Introduction To Assam

with Ram Singha's garments, jewels, elephants, horses arms ; and this was done in February, 1708 ; and the news of his annexation of the Kachari and Jayantiya countries to the Ahom kingdom was carried to Matulla the Muhammadan Fauzadar at Sylhet.

The Jayantiya Rebellion, its Casualties And Booty

This was resented to by the Jayantiyas who were not prepared to submit to foreign yoke, and this rising was put down by Rudra Singha after much trouble. This resulted in 2,366 casualties including twelve high officers on the side of the Ahams ; and among those killed "960 came from upper Assam, 1009 from Gauhati, 280 from the Dhekeri country and 105 from Sonapur. But on the other side save the massacre at Jayantiyapur very few were killed ; while 700 war prisoners 1,600 Assamese refugees mainly were brought from Khaspur and about 600 from Jayantiyapur". The booty obtained in the expedition "included 3 cannon, 2273 guns, 109 elephants, 12,000 pieces of silver of the Muhammadan, Aham, Koch and Jayantiya mints, and numerous utensils of gold, silver and other metals", certain articles of jewellery also added.

Two Great Durbars in Tents pitched With Gold And Silver

" On the conclusion of the expedition Rudra singha removed his camp from Bijayapur to Sala, while the Jaintia and Kachari kings were kept in separate camps near Bishnath. In the middle of April (1708 A.C.) Rudra singh surrounded by all his chief nobles, received Tamradhwaj at a grand durbar in a tent supported by posts and silver. The captive chief was conveyed across the Brahmaputra in the royal barge and on landing was placed an elephant carrying a golden howdah. When he reached the camp he descended from the

Introduction To Assam

darbar tent where he dismounted and advancing on foot prostrated himself and knelt down before the king. He was introduced by the BarBarua, who recited the events which had culminated in his detention at Bishnath. The king offered him a seat and addressed him in a speech which was practically a repetition of that already made by the Barbarua. To this oration Tamradhwa] made a submissive reply. He was given formal permission to return to his own country and was dismissed from the Durbar with numerous presents. Before setting out he was received at a second durbar. He also paid a visit to the temple of Bishnath, in order to worship the idol of Siva, which it contained. He was given an escort of Ahom troops as far as Demera where he was met by a number of his own people from Khasput" (Gait's H. A., pp. 179-80).

The king of Jayantiya was also received some time later in the same manner, but was asked to make his nobles appear personally before Rudra Singha to make their submission, before their king could be allowed to go back to his territories. The nobles being frightened sent their message of submission, but feared to appear in person. Unfortunately Ramsingha died by a sudden attack of dysentery, and his son Jaynarayan (1708-29) who was also a captive gave two of his sister in marriage to the Ahom Monarch and was probably soon released.

Proposed Invasion of Bengal

Being encouraged by all this, he made through preparations to invade Bengal. "He proceeded in person to Gauhati and there organized a great army and a powerful fleet, and collected all his available cannon. The Kachari and Jayantia Rajas joined his army with 14,000 and 10,000 followers respectively and 800 Daffas came from the hills north of the Darrang

Introduction To Assam

district". But this was frustrated by his illness to which he succumbed in August 1714, at Gauhati.

Cause of Importing a Preceptor From Outside Assam

Rudra Singha's "Hindu proclivities increased as he grew older and he at last decided formally to embrace that religion and become an orthodox Hindu... Rudra Singh could not bear the thought of humbling himself in this way (neophyte prostrates himself before the Garu, preceptor) before a mere subject, however saintly. He therefore sent to Bengal) and summoned Krishnaram Bhattacharya a famous Mahant of the Sakta sect... The Mahant was at first unwilling to come but consented on being promised the care of the temple of Kamakhya... When he arrived the king changed his mind and refused to become his disciple, and the priest departed again in his dudgeon. At this moment a severe earthquake occurred which shattered several temples; and Rudra Singh interpreting the phenomenon as an indication that the Mahant was a real favourite of the Gods hastened to recall him. He still hesitated to take the decisive step but satisfied the Mahant by ordering his sons and the Brahman of his entourage to accept him as their Guru."

Siva Singh (1714-44) Becomes The Parvatiya Gosain's Disciple

Rudra Singha left five sons Sivasingh, Pramata Singha, Barjana Gohain, Rajeswar Singh and Lakshmi Singh. On his death, his eldest son Siva Singha, christened Sutanfa, who was with his father, went to Rangpur (near Sibsagar) and ascended the throne (1714-44) there. The only warlike event of his reign is the Daffa expedition of January, 1717, and the subsequent construction of an embankment at the foot of the Daffa hills to prevent future raids. Siva Singha

Introduction To Assam

following his father's dictation, became a disciple of Krishnaram whom he not only put in the management of the Kamakhya temple but also gave large grants of land at different parts of his kingdom which his successors, all since known as the Parbatiya Gosains (the preceptors of the Nil hill where Kamakhya is situated, at Gauhati), are still enjoying, and so it is that almost all the modern Saktas (worshippers of the goddess) are disciples of these foreign preceptors.

Phuleswari, The Bar Raja (1722-31)

" Siva Singha was completely under the influence of the Brahman priests and astrologers ; and in 1722 he was alarmed by their prediction that his rule would shortly come to an end, that he not only made many and lavish presents for the support of temples and Brahmans in the hope of conciliating the gods and averting the threatened calamity, but also endeavoured to satisfy the alleged decree of fate by a subterfuge which greatly diminished his prestige in the eyes of his people. He declared his chief queen Phuleswari, who assumed the name Pramatesvari (one of the names of Durga) to be the " Bar Raja " or chief king ; made over to her the royal umbrella, the Aham emblem of sovereignty ; and caused coins to be struck jointly in her name and his.

Coins of Siva Singh And Bar-Raja

" The inscriptions on the coins of Siva Singh's reign confirm this story. Those issued prior to 1724 bear his name only ; those of 1724 to 1731, with one exception, are in his name and Phuleswari's ; those of 1732 to 1736 in his name and Ambika Devi's and those of 1739 to 1744 in his name and Sarveswari's. Some coins were issued in Siva Singh's name alone in 1732 after Phuleswari's death and in 1738 and 1739 after the death of Ambika Devi and before Sarveswari became queen.

Introduction To Assam

Taproot of Later Mayamara Rebellion

"To make matters worse, Phuleswari's authority was far from nominal. She was even more under the influence of the Brahmans than her husband, and in her consuming zeal for Sakta Hinduism, such as so often distinguishes neophytes, she committed an act of oppression which was destined to have far-reaching and disastrous consequences. Hearing that the Sudra Mahants of the Vaishnavā persuasion refused to worship Durga she ordered the Moamarla and several other Gosains to be brought to a Sakta shrine where sacrifices, were being offered, and caused the distinguishing mark of the Sakta sect to be smeared with the blood of the victims upon their foreheads. The Moamarlas never forgave this insult to their spiritual leader, and half a century later, they broke out in open rebellion."

Aham in Generally Embracing Hinduism And Other Achievements of Siva Singh's Reign

Phuleswari died in 1731. Her sister Deopadi whom the king married now succeeded her as Bar Raja (chief king) assuming another name of the goddess, Ambika. When she too died in 1738, the king married a third wife, Anadari, renamed Sarveswari who became the BarRaja of course of a nickname for a queen assuming the power of the king. Siva Singh died in 1744. On examining the inscription of the 48 copperplate grants of Aham kings, Gait finds out the number against the donors as :—Gadadhar Singha, 3; Rudra Singha, 3; Siva Singha 19; Pramatta Singh 3; Rajeshwar Singha, 2; and Chandrakanta Singha, 1; (H. A. p. 184). It is due to Siva Singha's support in particular that the Ahams now gave up their tribal beliefs and customs and embraced Hinduism though their tribal priests and spiritual guides, the Deodhais and Bailungs yet tried

to adhere to the observance of some tribal ceremonies such as the worship of Somdeo and the Chaklong of marriage. One Aham chronicle styles Siva Singha even as author of a few songs, and he was undoubtedly a patron of learning. He is said to have established such an elaborate system of espionage that he had accurate information of everything that was done, or even spoken, in all parts of his dominions". "He constructed the Dhal Ali, and the tanks and temples at Gourisagor, Sibsagor and Kalugaon in Sibsagor, and made surveys of Bakata and Kamrup. The register or pera Kagaz based on this survey of Kamarup, was still extant at the time of the British conquest. It contained a list of all occupied lands except homestead, with their areas, and particulars of all rent free estates."

Pramatta Singha's (1744-51) Achievements

Siva Singh was succeeded, his sons being passed over, by his next brother Pramatta Singha (1744-51), christened Sunenfa who made a survey and took a census in 1745, besides erecting the temples of Rudreswar and Sukreswar at Gauhati and making masonry gateways at Garhgaon and the Rungghar, the amphitheatre at Rangpur for animal fights.

Rajeswar Singh (1751-69) And Kirttichandra Barua's Burning a Pyre of Ahom Chronicles

He was succeeded by his next brother, the fourth son of Rudra Singha christened Suramfa, but known as Rajeswar Singha (1751-69). Immediately after ascending the throne he exiled his elder brother, Barjana Gohain, who was passed over by the nobles considering him unfit to be a king for having marks of attack

of small-pox, to Namrup. His tribal priests advised him to have his residence at Taimung while the Hindu astrologers recommended Rangpur. Rajeswar approved the latter but built a second palace at Taimung. Though a man of responsibility he was more inclined to pleasures than to his royal duties which he left to his Barbaruwa, Kirtti Chanra Gandhela who abused his power to the great annoyance of the nobles and subjects. It reached its zenith when finding that the chronicle written by the Numali Bar Gohain recorded his descent as far from pure he got all the chronicles examined and burnt all those which he did not approve. This culminated in a plot against his life which however was not successful. "The conspirators were caught. Two of the ringleaders were impaled and one was fried to death in oil. The others were deprived of their noses and ears". (Gait, H. A., p. 86).

Outward Peace And Prosperity But Internal Unrest And Germ of Decay

Besides, the expeditions sent against the Daflas in 1758, against the Mikirs in July 1765, against the Kachari king Sandhikari in November 1766, and the last in November, 1768, to reinstate Jay Singha the king of Manipur who took the Aham king's shelter to drive away the Burmese for whom he became a fugitive, his reign was free from all foreign aggressions and the country enjoyed enough peace and prosperity. But this is only the surface. Looking deeper into the state of affairs we find that just below this skin of external peace and prosperity there were germs of unrest and decay. The people had already become too priest-ridden. The king himself became initiated to the Parvatiya Nati Gosain whom he gave a temple at Pandunath, spending a long time at Gauhati worshipping

at the temple there; and generally erecting temples and giving immense land to the Brahmans. The Mayamara Gosain was in the meantime brooding over the uncalled for mischief done to him and was spreading discontent among his disciples. The martial spirit of the race was already departed as is proved by the fact of many high officers finding plea not to go on active service which was to be visited upon by their dismissal and confiscation of their properties to the state, and even by the king's own ease-loving nature. (Rennel's *Memoirs of the Asiatic society of Bengal* p. 57) informs us that Manah was still the western boundary of the Ahom territories on the north bank of the Brahmaputra.

Lakshmi Singh (1769-80) And Rising of The Marans

Rajeswar Singha was succeeded by his youngest brother Lakshmi Singha (1769-80), christened Sunyefo, after much difference of opinion among the nobles. He got initiations from a new Sakta priest, Na Gosain, imported from Bengal, the old one refusing on ground of this new king's rumour of illegitimacy. He banished the two sons of the late king to Namrup and left the management of his kingdom in the hands of Kirtti-chandra BarBaruwa whose efforts were responsible for his ascending to the throne. The BarBaruwa became more despotic than ever and fanned the fire of rebellion by Mayamara sect known also as Matak. According to Gait, "Matak refers to the country once ruled by the Bar Senapati. When the Chingphos began to raid, they found the people of this tract better able to defend themselves than those residing under the decayed power of the Ahoms, and so called them Matak, strong, as distinguished from rulling or weak, subjects of the Ahoms. The Bar Senapati was a chutiya by tribe". (H. A., footnote, p. 193).

**Bangan, a Rebel Declares Himself King of
Namrup**

The Mayamara Gosain, whose disciple he had been, immediately took up the cause and broke into open rebellion. He mobilised an army from his disciples who under the command of his son Bangan, led them into Namrup where he being warmly received declared himself as king of Namrup. The king's elder brother, Barjana Gohain also joined them on the promise of being made a king and numerous other exiles and Kacharis joined them. They then triumphantly marched to Tipem where the royalists opposed them successfully, the first fight taking place in the banks of the Dibru river.

**Lakshmi Singha's Flight And Capture, And
Ramakanta Installed King, And Minted
Coins (1769 A.C.).**

In October, 1769, Raghawa, a Maran rebel, styling himself BarBaruwa, led an army by the north bank of the Brahmaputra and defeated the royalists in several actions. The king who on the advice of Kirtti Bar Baruwa became a fugitive to Gauhati was caught by Raghawa at Sonari Nagar and confined at Jaydaul temple. A majority of his nobles already deserted him and many of others in his company were confined and some put to death. Barjana Gohain who hastened to the capital to become a king was put to death under the Maran Bar Baruwa's orders. Kirttichandra and his sons also shared his fate. Bangan would now be hailed as king at Rangpur, but his father the Mayamara Gosain dissuaded him. Ramakanta a son of Nahar, the Maran chief, was then installed as king, and his other two sons were made chiefs of Tipam and Charing. Other leaders of the rising were distributed high

Introduction To Assam

offices of the state and allowed to occupy their residences. Raghawa himself remained as Bar Baruwa and appropriated all the wives of the king's harem, including the Manipuri princess. Coins were now struck in Ramakanta's name and dated equivalent to 1769 A.C. Many more old nobles were murdered and the deposed king's execution was planned.

Re-Installation of Lakshmi Singha (1770).

In April, 1770, on the eve of the Bihu (Bishuva) festival, when a large majority of the supporters of Ramakanta was out of the capital, the royalists according to a previous plan first surrounded Raghawa's house, caught him and put him to death. Ramakanta, his father and other nobles, met the same or similar fate, and the deposed king was re-instated; but his reign was far from peaceful. There were fresh risings of the Mayamaras, fresh conspiracies, which though partly suppressed and defeated only prevailed more bloodshed but less good will. Lakshmi Singh excavated the Rudrasagar tank and constructed many temples and "at the suggestion of the Na Gosain, the goddess Tara was worshipped with great ceremony, and immense amount of money was distributed to the Brahmans". And he died in December, 1780, A.C.

Gauri Singh (1780-95) And The Second Great Mayamara Rebellion (1786).

He was succeeded by his eldest son Sushitpangia alias Gaurinath Singha (1780-95) who immediately after his accession to the throne began to mutilate the other princes for his safety and beheaded the Bargohain and his near relatives at the instance of the Bar-Baruwa who himself lost his office and property soon after. His persecution of the Mayamaras culminated

Introduction To Assam

in an attack in April, 1782, on Garhgaon and the king himself and the capital was only saved by his Burha-gohain. The king then proclaimed a general massacre of the Mayamaras, including women and children, was resorted to, and many suspects and their relatives or followers were either blinded or fried to death on oil. There occurred a rising of the Mayamaras in the extreme east under Badar Gaonburha, which falling was succeeded by another on the north bank early in 1786. This reduced the king to such a strait that he was compelled to ask the chiefs of Rani, Luki and Beltal for help which even when lent would not save him. Gaurinath then appealed for help for the Manipuri, Kachari and Jayantiya kings. The Mayamaras infested both the banks and defeated the royalists reducing the king to seek refuge in flight to Cauhati, his capital being captured once more by the rebels.

Some Petty Kings And Their Coins Dated (1791-1797).

The Burha Gohain in spite of the disasters, held the royalist position on the Namdang about February, 1789, and made a fortification at Jorhat in April, 1790, suffering of the people knew no bounds and for want of food were compelled to eat whatever came before them. Meanwhile, many petty chiefs were elected as kings in such districts as Majuli, Sadiya, and the north bank. The Marans acknowledged Sarvananda as their ruler while the Mayamaras in general placed Bharath Singh on their throne at Rungpur; and both these kings minted coins, those dated 1791, 1792, 1793, 1795 and 1797 are of the latter, and those dated 1794 and 1795 of the former, being still extant.

**First Relation of Assam With The British,
September, 1792.**

Gauri Singha was thus wandering about in central and lower Assam where, also, by his own conduct and by that of his nobles he provoked disaffection; and Vishnunarayan, son of the late Hamsanarayan whom Gaurisingha got treacherously killed, not only drove away Krishnanarayan, the king's nominee as the tributary chief of Darrang, but, also took possession of north Gauhati and wanted to annex similar portion to his dominions. All this drove Gaurisingha to appeal to Lord Cornwallis (1786-93), the Governor General of India, through Lumsden, the Collector of Rungpur, for help; and accordingly in September, 1792, six companies of sixty sepoy each were sent under the command of captain Welsh. This is the first relation of Assam with the British, and the unnerved Gaurisingha could hardly dream that by his appeal he would be instrumental in soon changing the whole course of the future history of Assam. Any way captain Welsh came to his help, subdued his enemies, and defeated the Mayamaras in 1794, Gaurisingha himself dying on the 19th December of the same year.

Condition of The People During Gaurisingh's Reign

Gait, styles Gaurisingha as "the most incompetent, blood-thirsty and cowardly of all Ahom kings," and captain Welsh describes this king as "a poor debilitated man, incapable of transacting business, always either wishing or praying and, when seen intoxicated with opium," and his corrupt favourites as a set of villains, all drawing different way." Gait says :—"During his reign the people who had hitherto enjoyed a fair measure of happiness and prosperity, were plunged into depth of misery and despair. Where the Moamaras held sway, whole villages were destroyed and the inha-

bitants robbed of all their possessions were forced to flee the country or to eke out precarious existence by eating wild fruits and roots and the flesh of unclean animals. In lower Assam, the Bengal mercenaries, and gangs of marauding banditts who flocked into the province caused, similar, though less widespread havoc, while where Gaurisingh himself had power all persons belonging to the Moamaria communion were subjected to all manner of persecutions and barbarities."

**Money Value And Price List of Commodities About
The Close of The 18th Century**

Captain Welsh's reports illumine some dark corners of the social history of Assam towards the close of the eighteenth century. "At the sale of the loot taken at Rangpur (Sibsagar) rice in the husk was sold at the rate of six hundred pounds per rupee, while buffaloes fetched five rupees, and cows two rupees each". . . . "In a copper plate deed of grant of 1661 sak (1739 A.D.) the prices of various commodities are quoted, viz., rice $2\frac{1}{4}$ annas per maund; milk, $2\frac{1}{2}$ annas; gram 4 annas; salt and oil $3\frac{3}{4}$ annas; gur, $1\frac{1}{4}$ annas, and black peper Rs. 20 per maund. Betel leaf was sold at 40 bundles for an anna, earthen pots or kalsis at 643 per rupee, and areca nuts at 5,120 per rupee. In other similar records of the same period the price of rice is quoted at 4 annas per maund; gur Rs. $2\frac{1}{4}$; matikalai 5 annas pulse and ghee, 10 annas and oil Rs. $3\frac{1}{3}$; per maund. Elsewhere again rice is priced at 8 annas and matikalai at ten annas per maund; earthen pots at a rupee for 224, and betel leaf at anna for for 20 bundles of 20 leaves each. Amongst other article of which prices are given may be mentioned goats, Re. 1 each; ducks, 1 anna each; pigeons 1 pice; dhutis 5 annas and gamachas, 6 pice each." The money price was three times as it is now, while, measured in paddy it was more

Introduction To Assam

than forty times as great." (quoted in Gait's H.A., pp. 216-17).

Kamaleswar Singha's Reign (1795-1810) And Restoration of Peace

Gaurinath, was succeeded by Kinaram alias Suklingfa, a descendant of Gadadhar Singha, who on ascending the throne, assumed the Hindu name Kamaleswar Singh (1795-1810) and made his father Haring Raja. In his reign, there broke out a rebellion, since known as Danduwa-Droh, in Kamrup, led by two brothers Har Datta and Bir Datta, which of course proved abortive. There were also slight insurrections of Dafals and Mayamaras (1799 A.C.) and hostilities with the Kacharis and the Singphos and Kamtis; but they were not enough to disturb the order that was being restored, and the peace and prosperity that was being established in his reign through the sincere effort of the Burha Gohain, who really was all-in-all in these matters. It is in this reign that Rangpur was re-constructed and the Bhogdal (formerly Dichai) was excavated to improve the new town of Jorhat.

Chandrakanta Singha, (1810-18) And The First Burmese Invasion (1816)

Kamaleswar was succeeded by his brother Chandrakanta, alias Sudinfa (1810-18), who was still a boy when he came to the throne and was under the evil influence of a boy of his age Satram, the son of the Kukurachowa Chowdang. The Burhagohain who was really the young king's guardian was much disliked by Satram and the Barphukan on the governor at Gauhati, culminating in a plot against the Burhagohain in which the Barphukan might also be suspected as having some part. Satram was exiled to Namrup and an order of arrest was issued by the Burhagohain even to the Barphukan on charge of misgoverning etc. Being

informed in good time, the Barphukon made his escape and in order to avenge this insult, he managed at last to get a troop of 8,000 from Burma, swelled into 16,000 being joined enroute by the chiefs of Munkong, Hukong and Manipur, by the time it reached Namrup in 1816. The Ahom army already shattered offered opposition but without success. The old Burhagohain killed himself by tasting a piece of diamond and his son and successor fled to Gauhati; and the Barphukon up to this time finding his mission fulfilled, retained Chandrakanta as a nominal king he himself absorbing all power, and paying a large indemnity and cost sent the Burmese army back in April, 1817.

**Purandar Singha (1818-19) And The Second
Burmese Invasion, 1819.**

Fresh intrigues now were on foot, the Barphukan was assassinated and the now Burhagohain returned to the capital at Jorhat with a foreign force and his nominee Brajanath for the throne; Chandrakanta fled to Rangpur and the officer in charge of the capital was killed, and Brajanath who was going to be placed on the throne, already minted coins in his name about February, 1818. But on finding that he was rendered unfit for throne by mutilation, Brajanath's son Purandarsingha (1818-19) was seated on the throne. So some followers of the old Barphukan went once more to Burma and got a fresh troop which reached Assam in February, 1819. After offering a feeble resistance by the royal army Purandar Singh fled to Gauhati, and Chandrakanta who joined the Burmese on their way was re-instated as a nominal ruler. The Burmese brutally killed the Buragohain and the Barbaruwa and all their followers, appointed a new Barbaruwa and put him also to death. In this pass, in April, 1821, Chandrakanta left the Burmese and fled to Gauhati, for his own safety.

Jogeswar Singha Set up as King (1821) and Chandra Kanta's Last Efforts to Oust the Burmese (1820), (1821, and 1822)

The Burmese now set up Jogeswar Singha as the Aham king, but practically they became the real masters. Some pig coins (Gahari mohars) said to have been minted by the Burmese are figured in Stapleton's History and Ethnography of N. E. India (J.A.S.B., 1910, p. 164). The Burmese troops were scattered almost all over Assam to feed to exploit and to plunder. This gave an opportunity, to Chandrakanta to make an attempt at Gauhati in 1820, to drive away the Burmese, but his small and demoralised army was hardly a match for them. He made a second attempt in 1821 and was partly successful in re-establishing himself. Towards end of May 1821, Chandrakanta defeated the army at the command of Mr. Robert Bruce, despatched by his rival Purandar, won this European to his side after making him a captive, and imposed many defeats on the Burmese, and re-occupied Gauhati in January, 1822. But in the spring of 1822, the Burmese troops had strong reinforcement from Ava under the command of Mingi Maha Bandula, who later on became the commander of the Burmese army in Arakan; and a decisive battle took place in June, in which despite great bravery shown by Chandrakanta himself and by his army the Ahams were defeated for shortage of ammunition, and Chandrakanta fled once more to Goalpara.

Some Horrors of the Burmese Invasion Described

Major J. Butler records a few descriptions of the horrors of the Burmese invasion of Assam. "Fifty men were decapitated in one day. A large building was then erected of bamboos and grass, with a raised bamboo platform; into this building were thrust men, children and poor innocent women with infants, and a large quantity of fuel having been placed round the

Introduction To Assam

building it was ignited in a few minutes, it is said, by the witnesses of the scene now living—two hundred persons were consumed in the flames—Many individuals who escaped from these massacres have assured me that innumerable horrible acts of torture and barbarity were resorted to on that memorable day by these inhuman savages . . . All who were suspected of being inimical to the reign of terror were seized and bound by Burmese executioners, who cut off the lobes of the poor victims' ears and choice portions of the body such as the points of shoulders and actually ate the raw flesh before the living sufferers, they then inhumanly inflicted with a sword, deep but not mortal gashes on the body that the mutilated might die slowly and finally closed the tragedy by disembowelling the wretched victims. Other diabolical arts of cruelty practised by these monsters have been detailed to me by persons now living with a minuteness which leaves no doubt of the authenticity of the facts; but they are so shocking that I cannot describe them." (*Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*, London, 1855).

Assam Under the British and its Possible Derivative Meaning

This unhappy state of affairs in Assam was put a stop to by the British who also behaved with much insolence and threatening them not to shelter the Assamese fugitives in their territories, and then actually encroaching in the then British frontier tracts on the borders of Sylhet, Chittagong and Goalpara. This resulted in certain operations that had to be taken by the British on these borders early in January, 1824, though war was not formally declared against the Burmese till the fifth of March of this year. These operations culminated in the memorable treaty of Yandabu concluded on the 24th February 1826 by which the king of Ava was compelled to abstain from all in-

Introduction To Assam

terference in the affairs of the countries which now constitute the province of Assam. Though the management fell in some way to the hands of the British as early as November, 1823 under David Scott, the Agent to the Governor General for the Eastern frontier, Purandar Singha was recognised as the king of upper Assam except Matak and Sadiya, early from 1832 to October 1838, when he was deposed and the administration of the whole country was taken up by the British. Thus, the drama of a country maintaining its glorious independence for about five thousand years, from the reign of Naraka before the Kurukshetra war baffling innumerable strong foreign invasions at last came to a close, after the last stretch of the continuous reign of 600 years by the Ahams or Asams to whom we owe the present name of the province. This name which was spelt as A S A M in the early part of the British rule was, as we have seen through these paragraphs, originally used to connote the territories occupied by these Tai invaders, who first came from somewhere about Siam or Sam, and at the beginning inhabited the Saumar division of old Kamarupa being called by local people A-SAM or A-SAUM, with the Sanskrit prefix A which in one or other of its meaning might show their relations to Siam or Saumar. A S A M is in no way a Tai word, and so the new invaders could never call themselves or this land ASAM—Hence its derivation from A-SAM (non-equal) either applied to them or to the land, which was never so called before, seems forced and unnatural.

Suggested chronology of the kings of Pragjyotisha or Kamarupa till the end of 12th century.

| Line of time | Event in Indian History | King of Pragjyotisha or Kamarupa | His Queen | His Capital |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| 2500 B.C. | | Naraka Bhagadatta Vajradatta Pushpadatta | | Possibly Pragjyotishpur, modern Gauhati |
| 1000 generation or 3000 years reign of unknown kings of this time. | | | | |
| A.C. 350 | Chandragupta (320-30 A.C.) Samudragupta (330-75) Chandragupta II (375-413) Kamargupta (413-55) Skandagupta (455-67) | Pushyavarma Samudravarma Valavarma I Kalyanavarma Ganspativarma Mahendra Varma Narayanvarma Mahabharavarma or Bhutivarma Chandamukhavarma Sthira or Sthira or Shrid or Prasathivarma | Dattadevi Ratnavati Gandhavati Jyotnavati Subrata Devavati Vijnanavati Bhogavati Nayandevi or Nayanabha | |
| A.C. 400 | | | | |
| A.C. 500 | | | | |

| Line of time | Event in Indian History | King of Pragjyotisha or Kamarupa | His Queen | His Capital |
|--------------|--|--|--------------------------------|---|
| A.C. 600 | Raja Vardhan (605-66) Harsha Vardhan (606-47) | Susthita or Susthivarman (Mriganka) Supratisthita Varma Bhashar Varma or Kumara (C. 600-50) | Syama Lakshmi of Syama Devi | ... |
| 650 | | 1 Salastambha (Mlechachadhinatha) 2 Vijaystambha 3 Vignabastambha 4 Palakastambha 5 Kumaradeva | | Possibly Kamatapur |
| 700 | Lalitaditya (724 A.C.) | 6 Vajradeva 7 Harsha Varma or sri Harish (748 A.C.) 8 Valavarma II 9 10 11 Chakra 12 Arathi 13 Arath 14 Prelambha | | " Haruppeswar " " " " " " " " |
| 750 | Dantidurga (753 A.C.) | | | |
| 800 | | | | |

| Line of time | Event in Indian History | King of Pragjyotisha or Kamarupa | His Queen | His Capital |
|--------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 829 | | 15 Harjar (510 G.E. or 829-30 A.C.) | Mangal Sri or Srimattara | " |
| 850 | | 16 Vanamal | | " |
| | | 17 Jayamal | | " |
| 900 | | 18 Viravahu | | |
| | | 19 Valavarma III | | |
| | | 20 | | |
| | | 21 Tyag Singha | | |
| 950 | Sultan Mahmud (997-1030) | Brahma Pal | Kulada Devi | Durjaya |
| 1000 | | Ratna Pal | | " |
| | | Purandar Pal | Durlabha | " |
| | | Indra Pal | | " |
| | | Gopal | Nayana | " |
| | | Harsha Pal | | " |
| | | Dharma Pal | Ratna | " |
| 1100 | | Jay Pal | | Kamrup Nagar (possibly, Kamatapur) |
| | Jay - Prithvi (1170 A.C.) | Durlabha Narayan Tamradhvaj | | |

Suggested Chronology of Kings of different countries in old Kamarupa from the 13th to the 19th century.

| Line of time | Event in Indian history | Aham King | Khena dynasty & Koch King | Chutiya dynasty & Kachari King | Jayantia King |
|--------------|--|--|---|--------------------------------|---------------|
| A.C. 1200 | Muhammed Ghori (1186-1206) Slave Dynasty (1206-88) | | Niladhwaaj Khena (1204-56) Bakhtiya's invasion (1204) Ghiasuddin's invasion (1228) Ikhtiar's invasion (1256) | Ratnadhwaaj (1223 A.C.) | |
| 1275 | | 1 Sukafa (1278-68) 2 Sutenfa (1268-81) 3 Subinfa (1281-93) 4 Sukhangfa (1293-1332) 5 Sukhrangfa (1332-64) 6 Sutufa (1364-76) interregnum (1376-80) 7 Tyakothamdi (1380-89) interregnum (1389-97) 8 Sudangfa (1397-1407) | | | |
| A.C. 1300 | Khilji dynasty (1288-1321) | | | | |
| 1375 | | | | | |
| 1360 | Taimur's invasion (1398) Tuglak dynasty (1321-1414) | | | | |
| 1400 | | | | | |

| Line of time | Event in Indian History | Aham King | Khena dynasty & Koch King | Chertiya dynasty & Kachari King | Jayant a King |
|--------------|---|--|--|---|--|
| 1450 | Sayid dynasty (1414-51) Lody dynasty (1451-1526) | 9 Sujiangfa (1407-22) 10 Suphakfa (1422-39) 11 Susenfa (1439-88) 12 Subenfa (1488-93) 13 Supimfa (1493-97) | Nilambar (1455-98) Sachipatra Hussain sha's invasion (1498) Vivasingha (1515-40) | Nitipal (C, 1523) | |
| 1500 | Babar (1504-30) | 14 Suhungmung (1497-1539) 15 Suklenmung (1539-52) | | Khmkara (1531) Detsung (1531-36) Jasomnayan (1583) Sarrudaman (1606-10) Naranarayan (...) | Parvatrai (150-16) Maju gosain (1516-32) Burahpar varrai (1531-48) Bargosain (1548-64) Vijay Manik (1564-80) Prataprai (1580-96) Dhanmailk (1596-1685) Jasomnik (1605-25) |
| 1600 | Akbar (1556-1605) Humayun (1530-40) Jahangir (1530-40) Shahjahan (1627-58) | 16 Sukhamfa (1552-1603) 17 Susengfa (1603-41) 18 Suramfa (1641-44) 19 Sutyingfa (1644-48) 20 Sutamlfa (1648-63) 21 Supungmung (1663-69) | Naranatayan (1540-84) Raghudew (1581-1603) Parikshit (1603-13) Lakshmi Narayan (1584-1622) Bimnayan (1622-33) Prannarayan (1633-66) | | |
| 1650 | | | | Bhim Darpa (1637) Indra Ballabh (...) Birlarpa (1644-80) | |

| Line of time | Event in Indian History | Aham King | Khena dynasty & Koch King | Chutiya dynasty & Kachari King | Jayanti a King |
|--------------|---|------------------------------|---------------------------|---|--|
| 1675 | Shivaji (1674-80) | 22 Sunyatfa (1669-73) | | | Sundarra (1675-36) Chotsparvar- rai (1636-47) Jasamantarai (1647-60) Bansingh (1660-69) Pratap Singh (1669-69) Lakshminara- yan (1669-97) Ramsingh I (1697-1708) Jaynarayan (1708-29) |
| | | 23 Suklamfa (1673-75) | | | |
| | | 24 Suhung (1675-75) | | | |
| | | 25 Gobar (1675-75) | | | |
| 1700 | Aurangzeb (1658-1707) Nadirshah's invasion (1739) Battle of Plassey (1757) Warren Hastings (1772-85) | 26 Sujinfa (1675-77) | | Gauradhvaj (1681-95) Makardhwaj (1695) Udayaditya (.....) Tamaradhvaj (1706-08 r) Suradarpa (1708) | Bargosain (1729-70) |
| | | 27 Sudeifa (1677-79) | | | |
| | | 28 Suklfa (1679-81) | | | |
| | | 29 Suparfa (1681-96) | | | |
| | | 30 Sukhrungfa (1696-1714) | | | |
| | | 31 Suranfa (1714-41) | | | |
| | | 32 Sunenfa (1744-51) | | | |
| | | 33 Suramfa (1751-69) | | | |
| | | 34 Sunyeofa (1769-80) | | | |
| | | | | Sandhikari (1765 r) | Chatrasingh (1770-81) |

| Line of time | Event in Indian History | Aham King | Khena dynasty & Koch King | Chutiya dynasty & Kachari King | Jayanti a King |
|--------------|--|---|---------------------------|--|---|
| 1800 | <p>Lord Cornwallis (1786-93)</p> <p>Lord Wellesly (1798-1805)</p> <p>Lord Minto (1807-13)</p> <p>Lord Hastings (1813-23)</p> | <p>35 Suhitpongfa (1780-94)</p> <p>36 Suklingfa (1794-1810)</p> <p>37 Sudinfa (1810-18)</p> <p>38 Putandar (1818-19)</p> <p>39 Jogeswar (1819)</p> <p>Burmese mis-rule (1819-24)</p> <p>Yandabu treaty (1826)</p> | | <p>Harichandria Narayan (1771-?)</p> <p>Krishnachandra (1790-1813)</p> <p>Govinchandra (1813-30)</p> | <p>Jatrasingh (1781-86)</p> <p>Vijaynarayan (1786-89)</p> <p>Ramsingh II (1789-1832)</p> <p>Rajendranarayan (1832-35)</p> |

THE PEOPLE

Race, in Strict Biological Sense

The term Race now popularly used in the sense of a people or nation or extended to the linguistic and religious or cultural sense lacks precision in definition. Race, in the strict biological sense, signifies the classification of plant and animal groups in the physical sense alone and is divorced from all linguistic or cultural or even national associations. (*Racial Elements in the Population*, Oxford pamphlets, No. 22, p. 3).

Negroid, Mongolian and Caucasian Types of the Human Race

"The human race has been classified by Professor Flower under three main types—the Negroid, the Mongolian, and the Caucasian. The Caucasian is further subdivided into the dark group, which includes the Dravidians, the fair, which includes the Aryans. The Negroid type has its head-quarters in Africa, the Mongolian in the eastern part of Asia, whence it has over-flowed into America, and the Caucasian in Europe and Western Asia. The predominant type in the population of India (excluding Burma) is the Dravidian.... In the south of India there is a Negritic element which is thought to be derived from a stock akin to the Vedas of Ceylon, the Andamanese and other tribes of the Indian Ocean, and possibly the aborigines of Australia. This very primitive type of humanity may perhaps have drifted eastwards from Africa at a very remote period when the remains of the land area that once linked India with Madagascar were far more extensive than they are at the present day. The Negritic element is probably pre-Dravidian, but our knowledge of the very early distribution of the human race is still too rudimentary to justify any positive statement as to the relative antiquity in India of these two elements of her population." (*Gait's H.A.*, p. 2).

**Sir Risley's Classification Under Seven Heads
in 1891 Revised**

Sir Herbert Risley, in the *Ethnographical Survey of India, 1891*, makes a scientific classification of the Indian races as the (1) Dravidian, (2) Mongoloid, (3) Mongola-Dravidian, (4) Arya-Dravidian, (5) Scytho-Dravidian, (6) Indo-Aryan, and (7) Turko-Iranian. Mr. B. S. Guha made another scientific anthropometric survey of the people of India in the census of 1931 and revised, Sir Risley's earlier survey. He opines that the racial types still extant in the Indian population contain several extremely primitive strains representing "Elements from all the main divisions of mankind not found elsewhere to the same extent". So he divides the Indian races under six racial groups including nine sub-types, as the (i) Negrito; (ii) Proto-Australoid; (iii) Mongoloid (i) Pale-Mongoloids; of a long headed and (b) broad headed types; (ii) Tibeto-Mongoloids; (iv) Mediterranean (i) Palae-Mediterranean, (ii) Mediterranean and (iii) so-called Oriental type; (v) Western Brachycephals, (i) Alpinoid, (ii) Dinaric, and (iii) Armenoid; and (iv) Nordic. (R.E.P., Ox. pm., p. 8).

I Negritos, Probably the Earliest Settlers

Among all these races the Negritos are considered as the earliest settlers of India having considerably wide distribution as discovered of late in the interior of the hills of Cochin and Travancore, (B.S. Guha, *Nature*, 1928, p. 121; 1929, p. 123) and in the Rajamahar Hills (S. Sarkar, *Nature*, 1936, p. 37) as also among the Angami Nagas of Assam (J.H. Hutton, *Man in India*, 1927, p. 7).

**II. Proto-Australoids, Next Earliest and Most
Dominant in Tribal Population**

The next earliest and apparently more wide-spread primitive element in the aboriginal population seem

the proto-Australoid so termed from the fact of their being closely akin to the Australian tribes but as a more generalized type. A careful comparison of some south Indian tribes especially the Chenchus, Malayans, Kurumbas and Yeruvas and many members of the Munda, Santal and Kol groups; with the tribes Ceylon Indonesia, Malanesia and Australia show a regular gradation of the traits so prominent in the typical Australian tribes. Any way, "the Proto-Australoid type is the most dominant element at present in the tribal population of southern and central India as well as among semi-Hinduized tribes further north." (R. E. P. Ox., pam., p. 11).

III. Palae and Tibe-to-Mongoloids, the Last of the Trio Constituting the Tribal Population

The Mongoloid traits appear predominantly among the Tibetan and the Chinese and in the tribes known as the Glyaks, the Tungus and the Yakagirs of eastern Siberia in high percentage. (i) Palae-Mongloid strain is more primitive in nature and less prominent in characters. (a) The long-headed type of these appear "in the sub-Himalayan region as the more ancient stratum of the population and forms a dominant element in the tribes living in Assam and the Indo-Burmese frontiers. It extends far into Yunan and south eastern China". (b) The broad-head type again prove "of a decidedly less primitive character and occurs chiefly in Burma and in some hill tribes of the Chittagong district, such as the Chakma and the Magh". (ii) The Tibeto-Mongoloids decidedly display the racial characters most conspicuously, and occur in Sikkim and Bhutan and "must have infiltrated from Tibet in comparatively later times". Thus these three races Negrito the Proto-Australoid and the Mongoloid—compose the whole tribal population of India.

IV. Mediterranean Types, The Most Dominant in The Population of Northern India

The Mediterranean stem so termed from its connexion with the Mediterranean basin is by far the largest of the advanced races. (i) The Palae-Mediterranean type, so called, is said to be first and earliest of these types bearing close resemblance with the Proto-Egyptian strain. It is thought that this was the stem that "introduced the Megalithic culture in late Neolithic times". (ii) The Mediterranean group proper was in all probability "the race responsible for the development of the Indus civilization and subsequently dispersed by the 'Aryan' speaking Vedic invaders to the Gangetic basin, and, to a smaller extent, beyond the Vindhya. It forms today a dominant element in the population of northern India and an important constituent of the upper section of the people of the rest of the country". (iii) The so-called Oriental type described by Fischer, wrongly termed Semitic only for mixing with the people having Semitic speech, is the latest of these strains to enter India after their main concentration in Asia Minor and Arabia. "It is strongest in the Punjab, but throughout Sind, Rajputana and the western United provinces it is common. In the rest of the country also the type is not usual."

V. The Western Brachycephals or The Broad-Headed Strains And Their Co-Relation With High Lands

The western Brachycephals or broad-headed strains occur as "a comparatively later event in human history", the early types being all long headed. "There is apparently some correlation of the broad-heads with high lands from which it has been surmised that the mutations giving rise to them have taken place in mountainous countries, probably somewhere near the

Introduction To Assam

central Asiatic mountain axis, where conditions favourable to the growth of the head in the transverse rather than the longitudinal direction existed. It is likely that more than one mutation took place, one among the Mongoloid races in the Tibetan plateau or further north, and one or more among the Eurasiatic tribes living in the highlands between south western Siberia and Armenia. Broad-headedness is a dominant character and accounts for the increasing brachycephalization now observed among European races." (R.E.P., p. 21; R. B. Dixon, *The Racial History of Man* (1923), pp. 512-13).

Their Three Types (i) Alpinoids, (ii) Dinarics (iii) Armenoids From Chalcolithic Times

The three types of the group are (1) Alpinoids or Alpines, so termed from their association with that European region (II) the Dinarics, so called from the Dinaric Alps which stretch from Dalmatia to Croatia, and (III) the Armenoids. "In Europe, the appearance of the broad-heads synchronizes with the New Stone Age. In India, we have no such early testimony of the race, but in the Indus valley during Chalcolithic times, and later in the Iron-age sites of Tinnevely and Hyderabad, we find the presence of both the Alpinoid and Dinaric types heads.... It is likely, that these broad-heads drifted along the western littoral from southern Baluchistan through Sind, Kathiawar, Gujarat and Maharashtra into Kannada and Tamilnad and thence into Ceylon, leaving Malabar and Andhra unaffected.

Their East Ward Movement

"An eastward movement seems to have gone early into the Gangetic delta leaving a distinct trail in central India, eastern U.P. and Bihar. A subsidiary drift of the Dinaric race probably took place from the north-western Himalayas into western Nepal. It is present

all along the region from the Kho and the Burusho of Chitral and Gilgit to several racial groups in Nepal, though somewhat inter-mixed with a local variant of the Oriental race.

The Dinaric Type Mixed With The Mediterranean Group

"The Dinaric type is well marked in Bengal and Orissa mixed in varying degrees with the Mediterranean group, and in Kathiawar, the Kannada and Tamil countries it occurs in its purest form among the Georgis. In Gujarat the broad-heads are predominant but the wider forehead associated with shorter face among the Gujaratis points towards a greater admixture with the Alpinoid element. In Maharatta it has mixed largely with the longhead types.

The Parsis Originally Belonged to The Brachycephals Converted to Zoroastrianism

"The Parsis of Bombay are also broad-headed, but appear to be more allied to the Armenoid type of Asia Minor than to their Gujarati neighbours, from whom they differ in blood group distributions. Their blood-groups show resemblances to those of the Syrians and the Armenians (E. W. Macfarlane, *American Naturalist* 1942, p. 525), but they are very distinct from Guebres (the remnants of the old Persian population professing Zoroastrianism, still surviving in Kala Gebri near Teheran), who are all long-headed. It is possible as Dixon suggested; that the Parsi emigrants to Gujarat came from a broad-headed element of the Persian population who were converted to Zoroastrianism, while their brethren in faith, the Guebres who remained at home, represented the older racial stock."

**VI. The Nordic Race Evidence of Horse Sacrifice in The
Burial Mounds of Southern Russia And Upper
Yensie Regions**

"The last great race movement into India was associated with the Vedic invaders who belonged undoubtedly to the Northern steppe folk; moving south-westwards in a great racial wave along with the Kossites, they swept into North-west India somewhere during the second millenium B.C. It is possible that this type was first characterized in the Eurasiatic steppelands, between south eastern Russia and south western Siberia, from some of the more powerfully built longheaded races who drifted towards the north-east with the retreat of the ice sheets. In the Kurgans (burial mounds) of southern Russia and in the Minusinsk region of the upper Yenisei of the early Bronze age skeletons conforming to this type have been found together with evidence of horse sacrifice Chinese chronicles also speak of a tribe called the Yuechi who established the Tokharian State in eastern Turkistan in the centuries preceding the Christian era. They were described as light-skinned and red-haired and as Tokharian has been found to belong to the centum group of the Indo-Aryan languages, closely related to Greek and Latin, the Tokharis or Yuechis can reasonably be supposed to have been Indo-European speaking people.

**Little Archaeological Evidence of Indo-European
Speaking Vedic Invaders**

"Very little archaeological evidence is available regarding the early Indo-European speaking invaders of India, apart from the finds of the Kurram Valley and the Gangetic basin identified by Heine-Geldern as Indo-Aryan and belonging to 1200-1000 B.C. From references in ancient Vedic literature, their northern home, light skins and hair colours seem indisputable.

The human remains recently unearthed at the Dharmarajika monastery at Taxila, which was sacked by the white Huns in the fifth century A.D. are probably attributable to them.

Where This Type is Found Predominant

"At the present time the type is found very prominently on the north-western frontier among the Pathan tribes, mixed with Oriental and Dinaric elements. Among the tribes living in the valleys formed by the upper Indus and its tributaries in the Swat, Panjkora, Kunar and Chitral, it is the dominant type, especially among the Kaffir tribes south of the Hindu-kush mountains. In the Punjab and Rajputana and among the upper classes of northern India it is also present, but marked by increasing admixture with the older longheaded races of the Mediterranean stock. There is also a sprinkling of it in western India and as far east as Bengal. Among the Chitpavan Brahmins of Maharashtra it is strongly marked mixed with broad-headed races."

Natural Selection And Gradual Elimination of Some Original Characters

"In the tropical conditions of the northern Indian Plains the lighter skin, hair and eye colours are not suitable, as they afford less protection from the injurious radiations of the sun. Consequently, these characters were gradually eliminated by natural selection in the invaders who came from temperate climates. An interesting development therefore took place in these people in India. They retained some characters typical of the race, such as the build of the body, the tall stature and the long head, but they slowly lost the genes responsible for lighter complexion."

Part Played by The Nordic in The Composition of The People.

"From a broad point of view however a Nordic territory in north-western India, mixed with Mediterranean and Orientals, can be distinguished from a territory in Peninsular India containing the older Palae-Mediterranean element. On both sides of this are the domains of the Alpo-Dinaries, mixed no doubt with other types. The primitive darker elements have come in everywhere and with blood from other strains, chiefly Palae-Mediterranean, they constitute the lower stratum of the population. The Mongoloids occupy the submontane regions of the north and the east but various thrusts from them have gone deeply into the composition of the people". Languages and social customs depend on acquired characteristics and are subject to constant changes.

Parallelism Between Geographical Distribution of Races And Their Linguistic Divisions

"There is, however a rough parallelism between the geographical distribution of tribes and their linguistic divisions. The Dravidian speaking people live in the south below the Vindhyas; the central highlands are in the main occupied by the Austric-speaking tribes; the northern valleys of the Indus and the Ganges and the western and eastern portions are populated by Aryan-speaking races. The submontane regions on both the northern and eastern peripheries are inhabited by tribes speaking languages belonging to the Tibeto-Chinese family. Within each of these groups there is a diversity of racial types, no one of which can be correlated with the language spoken in that group. For instance the Dravidian languages are spoken not only by the Negrito kadars, . . . the Proto-Austroloid Chenchus, Malsers and Gonds, but also by

Introduction To Assam

the Palae-Mediterranean Tamilians and Andhras and the Anglo-Dinaries of the Carnatic and Coorg Aryan languages are the mother-tongues of peoples among whom all the racial types may be counted—the Nordic red Kaffirs, the Proto-Australoid Bhils and Palae-Mongoloid Gurkhas. The Tibeto Chinese languages are spoken by Mongoloid tribes belonging to all the racial elements within that division. Similarly, the Austric languages belonging not only to the Palae-Mongoloid Khasis of Assam, but, also to the Mundas, Santals and Hos of central India and the Negrito Semang and Sakai of the Malay peninsula".

Contributions to The Indian Culture by The Negritos, The Proto-Australoids And The Mongloid Races.

"On the contributions to the complex fabric of Indian culture", Mr. Guha says, "what the Negritos contributed we do not know, but there is some ground for thinking that the cult of the "figus" tree originated from them. To the Proto-Australoid races may perhaps, be attributed a large share of totemistic rites, exorcism, food taboos and magical beliefs still obtaining in Indian life. The ban on commensality and intermarriage which forms the basis of the caste system must also owe its origin to them. The use of silk, tea, rice, paper, terraced cultivation, communal houses, head-hunting and betel-nut culture may be mentioned as the contributions of the Mongoloid races. To one of its branches, namely, the Oceanic, we owe also the introduction of the outrigger canoe, the cocoanut and the pineapple.

Contributions of The Different Mediterranean Types

"The Palae-Mediterraneans probably brought pottery, Megalithic culture, with its associated fertility

rites and human sacrifice, and it seems likely that they were responsible for introducing matriarchal institutions and the high positions of women in peninsular India. The Mediterranean race proper as far as can be judged, developed the civilization of the Indus valley, and to it we owe the largest content of the present day Indian religion and culture. Most of the common domestic animals, river transports, garments, the structure of houses, the use of brick, painted pottery and the building of towns are due to them. Astronomy and the Indian script are also their contributions. . . . If the contention of the late Ramprosad Chanda be right, then the developments of the Bhakti cults and religious emotionalism of Gujarat and Bengal must be attributed to them.

**Contribution of The Nordic Race in The Dominion of
Art, Literature And Philosophy**

"The Nordics brought horses, probably iron and the best variety of wheat . . . The use of milk, alcoholic drinks, dicing, chariot-racing, and tailored garments were due to them. They introduced patriarchy in Indian social life, but their chief gift was undoubtedly 'the Aryan vehicle of thought. They gave the shape into which the contributions of other races were fitted. Their chief contributions, however, were in the domain of thought, rather than in material culture. Epic poetry, the concept Cosmic Order or *Rta*, lofty ethical ideas and philosophic thoughts, and abstract natural science were their gifts in building up of the Indian civilization, and it would be historically wrong and scientifically inaccurate to deny, that they have been directly or indirectly responsible for most of the glories of Indian literature, philosophy and art." (R.E.P. Ox. Pm. pp. 21-29).

Introduction To Assam

People Using Different Families of Speech

The census of 1931 of the present population of the new province of Assam presents the following percentages of people using different families of speech:—Austrie 6.0, Tibeto-Chinese 17.5, Dravidian 1.5, Indo-European 74.9. The Austrie group is divided into Austro-Nesian and Austro-Asiatic sub-families of which the former is not represented in Assam.

A. The Austrie Family

The Austro-Asiatic sub-family has two groups known as Monkhmer and Munda. Khasi is the type of Monkhmer speech of the Austro-Asiatic sub-family and forms a kind of island of speech in the centre of the province of Assam, surrounded on all sides by the speakers of other families of languages, the Khasi speakers in 1931 amounting to 234,000 of 321,000 Munda speakers in the year, 159,000 speak Mundari and 102,000 Santali, the balance being composed of Savara, Kurku, Kharia and other Munda dialects. Almost all the speakers of this group are tea-garden coolies or ex-coolies, save the Santali settlers of the Goalpara district.

B. The Dravidian Family

Of the four sub-families Tamil, Telegu, Malayalam and Kanarese of the Dravidian speech the distribution is not detailed, save that it had 140,840 speakers of the whole population of the province in 1931 A.D.

C. The Tibeto-Chinese Family

But, the Tibeto Chinese family is known to be distributed as the largest number of languages in Assam. The total number of speakers of this family is 1,628,000 and its two sub-families are Tibeto-Burman and Tai-Chinese, distributed as 1,622,000 and 6,000 speakers respectively.

Introduction To Assam

The Tibeto-Burmese Sub-Family

The Tibeto-Burman sub-family has numerous groups including (a) the Tibeto-Himalayan group which includes Bhotia of Tibet, Magari, Limbu and many other languages spoken in Nepal and Sikkim, the total number of speakers amounting to 7,000; (b) the north-Assam group consists of 99,000 speakers of whom 81,000 are speakers of Miri; 14,000 speakers of Abor; 2,285 speakers of Mishmi and 1,644 speakers of Dafla; (c) the Assam-Burmese group containing a host of languages, divided into many groups and sub-groups.

The Assam-Burmese Group

The Assam-Burmese group consists of (1) the Bado sub-group which comprises the Garo, Rabha, Chutiya, Koch, Baro or Bado (Kachari), Dimasa (hill-Kachari) and Lalung languages, the total number of speakers being 531,000, of whom 4,315 are speakers of Chutiya supposed to be the original language of non-Aryan upper Assam and now spoken only by the Deori section. Of the other number of this sub-group, Koch, a kind of Mongal Garo speech according to Linguistic Survey of India, is spoken in the Garo Hills; Baro, Bado, Mech or plains Kachari number 283,000; Dimasa or Hill Kachari speakers number 14,680; the speakers of Lalung number 9,000 out of a total tribal population of over 42,000. Between the Bado and Kuki Chin sub-groups of the Assam-Burmese branch comes Mikir, the total number of population being 126,457. Another most interesting sub-group of Assam-Burmese branch, (2) the Naga sub-group the number of its speakers being 265,000 while (3) the Kuki-Chin sub-group including Manipuri and all the numerous old and new Kuki languages number 591,000 speakers.

Tai-Chinese Family

The Tai-Chinese sub-family consists of Khamti and Shan (including Aitonla and Phakial) who belong

Introduction To Assam

to the Tai group of this sub-family, and who have only 6,000 speakers between them. The Ahom language now extinct belonged to this Tai group. (Census of India 1931, Vol. 111 Assam, part 1, Report by C.S. Mullan I.C.S.).

Earliest Neolithic Speakers of Mon-Khmer Group of The Austro-Asiatic Sub-Family

The earliest inhabitants of north-eastern India would thus appear to have been of the Austric stock, in all probability and its modern representatives, Khasis and Syntangs, belonging to the Mon-Khmer family of the Austro-Asiatic sub-family stand a surety for it, and as Rapson writes : "Austric languages which still flourish in Assam and Combodia remain in India and Burma as islands of speech to preserve the record of a far distant period when Northern India (possibly Southern India also) and farther India belonged to the same linguistic area. (Cambridge History of India, Vol. 1.p. 49) These aborigines of the country were a Neolithic people and the celts used by them have been discovered in various places in Assam. (Early History of Kamarupa, ch. 1) The Negroid strain known to be the most primitive of all the Indian races may be found only in the surrounding hills such as among the Angami Nagas, already mentioned (R.E.I.,ox,pm.)

Dravidian Invasion And Sub-Planting of Austric Races.

The Dravidian speakers, regarded to be the next in the field, poured in as invaders from the west. To quote Rapson once more: "There is therefore nothing to prevent us from believing that the survival of a Dravidian language in Baluchistan must indicate that the Dravidian came into India through Baluchistan in pre-historic times. Whether, they are ultimately to be traced to a central Asian or to a western Asian

Introduction To Assam

origin cannot at present be decided with absolute certainty; but the latter hypothesis receives very strong support from the undoubted similarity of the Sumerian and Dravidian ethnic types. (Cambridge History of India, Vol 1. p. 49) They supplanted the Austric races and occupied the whole of northern India.

Aryan Invasions And Their Assimilation of The Dravidian Culture

The Indo-European speakers appear to have followed the Dravidians long after, also from the west. They must have found these predecessors much ahead of them in culture and civilisation, and discovered Dravidian kingdoms not only in southern India, but also in northern India. Of course, the Aryans gradually assimilated this Dravidian culture and religion, and the now Aryanised cults of fallic and snake worship may surely be traced to a pre-Aryan Dravidian origin.

The Dravidians And The Chalcolithic Age

The Dravidians must have belonged to the chalcolithic age, and as Sir John Marshall puts it:- "Among the many revelations that Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa have had in store for us, none perhaps is more remarkable than this discovery, that Saivism had a history going back to the chalcolithic age, and perhaps even further still, and that it thus takes its place as the most ancient living faith in the world." (Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus civilisation Vol. 1. PP. VI-VII).

Outpour Of The Mongolians Pro-Aryan Fact

According, to Rai Kanak Lal Baruwa Bahadur C.I.E. the outpour of the hordes of Mongolian tribes into Assam from the north-east, was a pro-Aryan fact which is proved by the reference to these people as Mlechhas or foreigners by the Aryans. They belonged to the

Introduction To Assam

Tibeto-Burman sub-family of the Indo-Chinese or Tibeto-Chinese family, and their Bodo-group comprising the Garo, Rabha, Chutiya, Koch and Baro or Bado (Kachari) must have occupied the plains of the country for long (E.H.K., ch. I.).

The Kiratas Identified With The Bodos

Scholars opine that the Kiratas and Mlechhas described in the Mahabharata are the Bodo people, and the Kirata troops of Bhagadatta are therefore described in the Epic as shining like a gold pillar their yellow complexion. The Bodos must have formed the bulk of population ever since the days of the Mahabharata war and have inhabited the present Brahmaputra valley, northern and eastern Bengal, and its surrounding and intervening hills, while the Dravidians composed the predominant element in the population of the Surma valley as ever now. (Early History of Kamarup Ch. 1)..

Pre-Kurukshetra War Aryan Settlement in Prag-Jyotisha

Aryan settlement in pragjyotisha must have taken place long before the Mahabharata war. From the Ramayana we have that Pragjyotisha was founded by Amurtarajas, a son of the great king Kusa "who was apparently an "Aryan in Madhyadesa. (Pargiter's Ancient countries in Eastern India). Not only does Naraka's son, Bhagadatta, refer to himself as a friend of Indra, the God of heaven (Sabha Parva ch. XXVI, Vs. 12-13). Also the Drona Parva (ch. XXVIII V. 51) mentions of him as a friend of Indra :

*Ninatya, tam narapatimindravikramam sakhya-
mindrasya tadaindrirhave; Tatoporam stava jayak-
amshino naran vabhanja vayurbalavandrumaniva.*

Also in the Mahabharata it is stated that Bhagadatta was an 'aged friend' of Pandu, and he came completely

Introduction To Assam

under the Aryan influence from which it is natural to think that Aryans were settled in his kingdom. True, it is that in the *Adi Parva* (ch. L. XVII. V. 9) and also in the *Drona Parva* (ch. XXVIII, Vs. 37-38) Bhagadatta is as well referred to as an Asura :—

*"Vashkalo nama jatteshamasidasurasattamah;
Bhagadatta iti khyatah sa jajne purushashar-
bhah."*

*"Vimuktam paramastrena jahi Partha mahasu-
ram;*

*Vatrinam judhi durdhasham Bhagaddatam sura-
dvisham."*

This was evidently spoken by Krishna to incite Arjuna to kill Bhagadatta who was the friend of his father Indra.

Large Influx of Brahmans And Kayasthas in Kamarupa as Early as 5th. Century A.C.

. Further, it is narrated in the *Kalika Purana* (ch. XXVI-XL) that king Naraka who was brought up in the family of Janaka, the king of north Behar or Videha and married Maya, the princess of Vidarbha, killed the Kirata king, Ghataka, to conquer Pragjyotisha and settle the Aryans in his kingdom. Not to speak of such references in the *Epics* and *Puranas*, even the inscription of Bhaskarvarman mentions that about the 5th century A.C. there were Brahmans and Kayasthas in Kamarupa. Mahamahopadhyaya Padmanath Bhattacharyya Vidyavinode, the reputed editor of *Kamrup Sasanavali*, observes "It is so remarkable that while in the neighbouring province of Gauda (Bengal) the alleged import of Adisura of five Brahmans from Kauanj or the mythical creation of Saptasthi (700) Brahmans is not attributed to a period earlier than the 8th century A.D., there should be so many Brahmans found in a single village in Kamarupa two

Introduction To Assam

centuries earlier, (*Epigraphica Indica*, Vol. XIX, pp. 115-125).

Hiuen Tsiang Account of The Early 7th. Century

The records of Hiuen Tsiang who visited the country in the early half of the 7th century A.C. throw much light on this point too. He mentions: "The country of Kamarupa is about 10,000 li (nearly 1700 miles) in circuit. The capital is about 30 li. The land lies low but is rich and regularly cultivated. They cultivate the jack fruit and the cocoanut... The climate is soft and temperate. The manners of the people are simple and honest... Their language differs a little from that of mid-India... their memories are retentive and they are earnest in study.

"Abundant Deva Temples" in Kamarupa

"They adore and sacrifice to the Devas and have no faith in Buddha; hence from the time Buddha appeared in the world, even down to the present day, there never as yet has been built one Sangharama as a place for the priests to assemble. Such disciples as there are, are of a pure faith, say their prayers secretly and that is all. There are abundant Deva temples, and different sectors to the number of several myriads.

The King "of The Brahman Caste" And of the Time of Narayan Dev

"The present king belongs to the old line of Narayan Dev. He is of the Brahman caste. His name is Bhaskar Varman, his title, Kumar. From the time that this family seized the land and assumed the Government, there have elapsed a thousand generations. The king is fond of learning and the people are so likewise in imitation of him. Men of high talent from

Introduction To Assam

distant regions, seeking after office, visit his dominions. Though he has no faith in Buddha, yet he much respects Sramanas of learning.

The Frontiers of Kamarupa

"On the east this country is bounded by a line of hills... The frontiers are contiguous to the barbarians of the south-west of China... On the south-east of this country, herds of elephants roam about in large numbers, therefore in this district they use them principally for war. Going 1,200 or 1,300li to the south (about 200 miles) we come to Samatata (East Bengal). (Beal's Buddhist Records of the Western world, Vol. II, p. 195).

Further Proof of Bhaskar Being Early Aryanised

Bhaskar Varman of course was a Brahman in the manner of the Guzarati Nagar Brahmins, holding the Varma title. Any way the world is eloquent on the point of his following the Brahmanistic as opposed to the Buddhistic faith. Thus, the point of his being long Aryanised seems beyond dispute. Hiuen Tsiang's description of Bhaskar being personated as Brahma while Siladitya Harsha personated himself as Sakra (Indra) in their procession along the Ganges, already mentioned seems to corroborate this view. This is further confirmed by the fact of another king of this line being treated with great respect by Aja, in the *Raghuvamsa* (ch. VII, V17) by Kalidasa.

Earliest Asura or Non-Aryan Kings of PragJyotisha

True, it is that the earliest known kings of Prag-jyotisha, starting with Mahiranga who was succeeded in turn by Hatak, Sambar and Ratna were all styled as Asur, an appellation undoubtedly suggesting their non-Vedic Aryan origin or character. They were followed by Ghataka, the ruler of the Kiratas who are

Introduction To Assam

classed by Manu with Mlechchhas. 'Kirata' is said in the chronicles of the Tippera rulers, to have been the ancient name of their country, the word still surviving in that sense to the sub-Himalayan territories between the Dud Kosi and Arun rivers. Siva who adopted the form of a Kirata to fight a duel with Arjuna in their delty, whence his wives Uma and Ganga, born of the Himalaya, have the nickname Kirati. (Gait's H. A., p. 12, footnote).

Naraka Not An Asura (Non-Aryan) By His Lineage And Breeding

Ghataka was overthrown by Naraka who was also called Asura, but whose life-story does not suggest a non-Aryan origin. According to the Kalika Puran (ch. XXXVIII), the great Rajarshi (Royal ascetic) Janaka, king of Videha (north Behar) being childless made a great *jajna* (sacrifice) as a result of which he obtained one daughter and one son in the very sacrificial ground born of Earth. The daughter was of course Sita and the son Naraka; the latter being so named by the royal priest Gautama for Janaka found this new-born male child in his sacrificial ground placing his head on a human skull (Nara-man; Ka-head), (Kalika Purana, ch. XXXVIII, v. 2).

*Narasya sirshe svasiro nidhaya sthitavan jatah ;
Tasmattasya munisceshto Narakam name bai
vyadhat.*

And Naraka like Sita, was brought up in the royal family of Videha till he was sixteen, when he came to Pragjyotisha and established himself there. It is a fact beyond dispute that Videha was one of the earliest celebrated colonies of the Aryans who settled here directly, after they left the banks of the Saraswati, at least by the time of the Brahmans, and that Janaka

Introduction To Assam

and Sita were of course truly Aryan. So what for his divine lineage from Vishnu (as Varsha) and what for his being brought up as a son by Rajarshi Janaka we have no reason to call him a non-Aryan.

Bana Asur, His Predecessors And Descendants.

Naraka, born in the Treta Yuga, was foretold by Vishnu that he would have a son by the end of the Dwapara, and warned that Naraka's lease of life would cease whenever he would become irreverent to gods and to goddess Kamakhya. Treta ended and Dwapara was nearly coming to a close till when all fared well with Naraka. Just about this time Bana Asura was born to Bali (son of Virochana and grandson of the great Prahlad) who was played a deception by Vishnu in his Vaman (Dwarf) incarnation and sent Bali to Sutala, where his dominion is identified by some with Bolivia in South America (just opposite to India in the old world) which is said to contain some alleged Hindu temples even today. Bali and so his son Bana's kingdom was Sonitpur identified with modern Tezpur, and the latter's daughter, both according to the Vishnu Purana and the Bhagawat, was married by Aniruddha, the grandson of Sir Krishna. Bana's grandson Bhaluka had his capital Bhalukpung near Balipura at the foot of the hills occupied by the Akas who claim to be his descendants. It is likely that those people had once great sway over the plains but were subsequently driven to the hills by more powerful invaders (Gait's H.A., p. 17).

Naraka's Later Irreligious Nature Held Responsible For His Downfall

Now, Naraka contracted much friendship with Bana whose company seems responsible for the former's change of nature. So despite Vishnu's timely warning, Naraka became a persecutor of Gods and religious

Introduction To Assam

persons, culminating in his refusal to allow the great sage Vasishtha to visit the temple of Kamakhya. His crowning irreverence for Kamakhya herself was marked by his proposal to marry her, which the goddess at last evaded only by a trick. This act lost him Kamakhya's favour for good and the former courted a curse from Vasishtha to the effect of his early death by the hand of Vishnu as Krishna. The curse was soon carried into action, and Krishna came from Dwaraka near about modern Gujarat, fought with Naraka though his son, and by slaying him released the 16,000 girls captured by Naraka, took away his 14,000 elephants and his horses, and recovered the ear-rings which Naraka snatched from Aditi the great mother of the gods. Thus, it is, if at all, in his later irreligious and presumptuous nature rather than in his origin that we should look for the aptness of his appellation of Ahusa, in the ordinary sense of the term.

All Kamarupa Kings Down to 12th. Century were Aryanised.

The life-story Naraka is described in the Bhagawat (BK. X. ch. LIX) and Yogini Tantra (First half, ch. XII), besides the Kalika Purana (Ch. XXXVI to XL). The Yogini Tantra further mentions the names of other kings of Kamarupa, such as, Deveswar ruling at the beginning of the Saka era, of Nara Sankar or Nagakhya ruling at Pratapgarh in Viswanath about the end of the fourth century A.C., and others, about whom our knowledge is scant; but there seems little doubt that the kings of the line of Naraka who practically ruled till the twelfth century were all Aryanised. Some suspicion is entertained in regard to the twenty-one kings commencing with Salastambha, who is styled as Mlechchhadhinatha. But, Mahamahopadyaya Padmanath Bhattacharya gives sufficient reason, to say that the line of Salastambha, also must have belonged

Introduction To Assam

to the Naraka dynasty for they too used the same seal with the picture of an elephant and called themselves Pragjyotishadhipanvaya, exactly as the Varman and Pala kings did. He opines that for some reason which was stated in the copper plate of Harjar Varma, but the lines have since been defaced, they were disreputed as such (Kamarup Rajavali, p. 19). So we may say they were also Aryanised kings.

Brahma-Varta And Arya-Varta

The first Aryan colonies seem the tract between the Saraswati and the Indus, and then that between the former and the Drishadvati, then called Brahma-varta. Finally, the whole country bounded by the Himalayas and the Vindhya, respectively, on north and south, and by the Eastern and Western seas became occupied by the Aryans whence it assumed the name Aryavartta, (Manu Samhita).

*Asamudrattu bai Purvadasamudrattu Paschimāt;
Tayorevantaram girjyorajyavartam vudurvudhah.*

The countries to the immediate west of Pragjyotisha remained long as non-Aryan countries and special penance was prescribed for those who would visit them on any purpose other than pilgrimage. Manu Samhita's injunction is too well known :

*Anga Vanga Kalengeshu Saurastreshu Magadhesu;
Tirtha-jatram, vina gachchan punah
samskaramarhati.*

Identification of Anga, Vanga, Suksma, Kalinga And Magadha

Mention of Anga and Magadha is seen in the Atharva Veda Samhita (5|22|14) : "*Gandharibhya mujavadhyo Angabhyah Magadhabhyah*". The central and Southern Behar comprised Anga and Magadha

Introduction To Assam

respectively. Identification of ancient Vanga is not as easy as it appears; but it is quite certain that it was not the present Vanga (Bengal) as such. The Sakti-sangam Tantra (Ch. VII) describes the boundaries of Vanga as:—

Ratnakaram samarabhya Brahmaputrantargatam
Sive;

Vangadesho maya proktah sarvasidhi
pradarsakah.

Even the renowned Smarta scholar Raghunandan writes; "*Lauhityat purvatah Vanga. Vanga swarnagramadayah*" (Dhaccar Itihas). So ancient Vanga is practically identified with Eastern Bengal, east of the Brahmaputra. In the Mahabharata (Vana Parva, Ch. 114) the Vaitarani river in the country of Odra is defined as the boundary of Kalinga: "*Ete Kalinga Kauntyeja jatra Vaitarani Nadi*". So Kalinga was to the south of Magadha and comprised Orissa. In between Magadha and Kalinga was situated Sukshma including ancient Tamralipta.

**Pundra, One of The Five Sons of Sudeshna And
Dirghatama, Perhaps Named after The Sons of
Viswamitra**

The Vishnu Purana following the Mahabharata (Adi Parva Ch. 104) describes Anga, Vanga, Kalinga, Sukshma and Pundra as five sons born of Sudeshna by the sage Dirghatama, and the countries they ruled came to be known by their names.

Ango Vanga Kalingascha Pundra Sukshmascha te
sutah;

Teshah desah samakhyatah swanama kathita
bhuvī.

Pundra included the country between the Mahananda on the west and the Karatoya of the east. According

Introduction To Assam

to the Aitareya Aranyaka this country was called Pundra from the name of the sons of Viswamitra. From Pundra Vardhana (capital of Pundra), Hiue Tsiang writer, "going east 900 li or so (about 150 miles) crossing the great river Kalotu we come to the country of Kamarupa". Major General Sir Alexander Cunningham who could identify Pundra Vardhan with Pabna wrote "Now Kamatapura, the capital of Kusa Behara is exactly 150 miles or 900 li from Pubna. . . while Gohati is about twice that distance or say, 1900 li or 317 miles from Pubna. . . . As the position of the former agrees exactly with the distance recorded by the pilgrimage it is almost certain that it must have been capital of Kamarupa in the seventh century. (Ancient Geography, pp. 572-73).

Pundra Vardhan Identified With Mahasthangard by A Find of The 3rd Century B.C.

But, a recent find makes it sufficiently clear that Cunningham's identification of Pundra Vardhan with Pabna must have been wrong. The Government of India publication "India in 1931-32" has among other things the following:—"The most important find of the year in the field of Epigraphy was a small fragment of stone, bearing an incomplete inscription of six lines in the early Brahmi script of the third century B.C. which was dug up by a labourer among the extensive ruins of Mahasthangarh in the Bogra district and acquired by the Archeaological Superintendent at Calcutta. The new inscription is the earliest antiquity found at Mahasthanagarh with Pundravardhana, the ancient capital of North Bengal or Varendra desa". Pragjyotishpur or Gauhati is of course within a distance of 150 to 200 miles from this Mahasthangarh in the Bogra district.

**Pragjyotish, The Only Aryan Kingdom in The
East For Long**

Whatever this may be, these were of course all non-Aryan countries for long. Scholars are generally of opinion that Pragjyotisha, the land of early light, as the name suggests, was occupied by the Aryans long before these countries of the environment. Rai Bahadur Dr. D. C. Sen says:—"The pre-historic kingdom of Pragjyotish which extended from modern Jalpaiguri to the backwoods of Assam, was one of the earliest Aryan colonies in the country". (History of Bengali language and literature, p. 1). Babu Bankim Chandra Chatterji opines:—"In very remote times, there was an Aryan kingdom where Kamarupa is located. Probably, in ancient times this kingdom alone shed the lustre of the Aryan-speaking race among all the non-Aryan countries, whence it owes its name". (Pravandha Pustak, part 11, Bangalar Itihaser Bhagangsa). Babu S. N. Bhadra M.A. also writes to the same effect:—"The eastern part became an Aryan colony in the time of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata'. History of North India). The learned author of Sri-Hatter Itivritta also shows how the neighbouring countries like Pundra Vardhana remained non-Aryan countries when Amurta Raja established the Aryan kingdom of Pragjyotisha (Srihatter Itivritta part II).

**The Theory of A Direct Current of Pre-Vedic Aryans
into Kamarupa**

Some Assamese scholars think that a branch of pre-Vedic Aryans entered Assam by the foot of the Himalayas from the north long before the Vedic Aryans came and trace of it is left in the Assamese speech with its special traits of pronunciation and vocabulary (Asamiya Bhasher Maulik Vichar, Introduction p. iv).

There is also a tradition that there was once a Kalita country on the other side of the mountain range to the north-east of Assam. In the *Mudrarakshasam* we find mention of the Kulutas as inhabitants of the Kuluta country who under their king Chitravarman helped Malaya Ketu against Chandragupta Maurya. They are regarded as belonging to Eastern India. These Kulutas or Kalitas also live in parts of Orissa. "The Kalitas once had great sway in Rungpur; and many of those remaining have assumed the title of Kaists: according to Dalton.

**The Theory of Pre-Vedic or Non-Vedic Aryan
Settlement Not Well Founded**

While the Aryan descent of the Kalitas at least in Assam, does not admit of any doubt, and while on the authority of some scholars one can further commit to the fact that the Kalitas were probably the earliest Aryan settlers in Assam, the present available data may not seem sufficient to make the familiar theory of prevedic Aryan settlement of Assam stand on a scientific ground. We should, therefore, hold that they migrated to Pragjyotisha through Videha or Magadha which countries were then conterminous with Pragjyotisha. Later, Muhammadan writers such as the authors of *Ain-i-Akbari* and the *Riyaz* in giving an account of the early kings of Bengal begin with Bhagadatta, for then the whole of modern north Bengal, and possibly central Bengal also, was within his kingdom, and his dynasty ruled Bengal for early 2200 years after which it passed to Noz Gouria, a Kayastha king (Dalton's *Ethnology*, p. 7) whose descendants ruled for 250 years till Adisura became the ruler.

**Aryanisation of Pragjyotisha Must Have Occurred
in Pre-Vedic Times**

Thus, in the kingdom of Pragjyotisha stretchings as far as Mithila (Videha or north Behar); and as far south as the Ganges or the then sea, Aryanisation must have begun in pre-Mahabharata times and of course long long before central or lower Bengal; and the successors of Bhagadatta held the old territories for a long time until perhaps the rise of the Mauryas and, thereafter, the Guptas. "Besides, it may be supposed that as the earliest Aryan colonists in Assam were the Kalitas, the kings of Naraka line were probably Aryan Kalitas". (Early History of Kamarupa, ch. I. p. 25).

**Other Proofs of Early Aryan Settlement in
Pragjyotisha**

Besides, the point of language the early Vedic Aryan settlement in Pragjyotisha seems forced on us by yet other facts. The Assamese Vihu (Vishuva) festivals occurring in the two equinoxes and the two solstices (though the one of the summer solstice has since become out of use) must have had some connexion with the Atiratra, Mahavrata and the Vishuvaha sacrifices of the Alteriya Brahmana (IV, 4, 18) and seem as old. The Assamese social customs regarding prevalence of widow re-marriage etc; dress as 'mekhela' (Vedic mekhela) and 'riha' (remnant of the holy thread of women and worn in the same manner); ornaments such as 'mani', 'kharu', (vedic khadi), Kariya (vedic kurlra); khopa (vedic Kaparda) or lock of hair, worn by men and women alike; pots as 'Charu' and pans as 'thali' (vedic 'sthal') professions, particularly weaving and jewellery such as 'mina' are given as proofs of early Vedic Aryan settlement in Pragjyotisha (Kaliram Medhi's Assamese Grammer and Origin

Introduction To Assam

of the Assamese language, Introduction II, pp. XXXIX-XLVII).

Two Main Periods of Aryan Immigration

The probable interpretation of pre-vedic or earlier non-vedic Aryan settlement in Pragjyotisha may therefore be found in the following facts. "The Aryan tribes who continued, perhaps, for generations or even for centuries, to swarm over the mountain passes into southern Afghanistan and the Punjab, or through the plains of Baluchistan into Sindh and the Valley of the Indus, must, no doubt, have spoken a variety of kindred dialects". (Rapson's *Ancient India*, p. 9). Also, according to Dr. Grierson: "The literary records of the latest times of this invasion show us one Indo-Aryan tribe complaining of the unintelligible speech of another and even denying to it the right of common Aryanhood" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* vol. XIV., p. 487). He further writes: "An attempt has been made to solve this problem (of Midland, intermediate and outer groups of the Indo-Aryan languages) by distinguishing two main periods of Aryan immigrations."

According, to the ingenious hypothesis of Dr. Hoernle, which has also obtained the support of Dr. Grierson and Sir Herbert Risley the linguistic and anthropological experts of the Census of 1901, the earliest wave of immigrants came from the west, and spread themselves over the greater part of the western and northern India before the arrival of the second wave. The later settlers, probably, came across the northern frontier, and, entering the Punjab like a wedge, thrust the early comers outwards in three directions. The languages of the outer band comprising (Kashmiri, western Punjabi and Sindhi on the west and north, Marathi on the south, and Behari, Oriya, Bengali

and Assamese the east) represent the speech of the earlier immigrants, and the languages of the Midland (consisting of Western Hindi of the Gangetic Doab and the eastern part of the Punjab where the hymns of the Rig Veda were composed) the speech of the immigrants. As time went on, the people inhabiting the middle band, through the expansive power of superior culture and more vigorous and larger forces, overcame or drove back on all sides representatives of the earlier immigration. Thus, we find in the territories of considerable area intermediate mixed forms of speech formed by a fusion of the two varieties of Aryan speech." (Encyclopaedia Britannica, vol. XIV, p. 488).

How The Immigration of Pre-Vedic or Non-Vedic Aryans Entered Pragjyotisha

"The latter (the earlier immigration of Aryans) had apparently no literature nor any priest with them, and in fact division of castes was unknown to them. The second wave was a gradual process extending over several centuries and at different epochs. They were the vedic Indians. The Kalitas are apparently the descendants of the earliest or first wave of Aryan immigrants. It is probable that in their march eastward, having been driven forward by the second wave of Aryan settlers some of their brethren parted company and moved southward and entered the mountainous country of Cuttack and Sambalpur, while the main body continued their onward march and eventually entered Assam (Pragjyotisha) and spread over the "lovely paphian region" in the Brahmaputra valley. The language and social system which they brought from their original home have not obliterated through ages although fresh waves of Indo-European settlers, the Vedic Indians, later poured into Assam and merged in Assamese society". (Assamese Grammar and Origin of the Assamese

language, Introduction pp. XLVIII).

**Vedic Culture Introduced into Pragjyotisha at A
Much Later Period**

" There we find (Satapatha Brahmana I, 3.3, 14-18) that Videgha Mathava of the country of Kosala-Videhas was at first on the bank of the Sarasvati river. Fire (i.e. the fire-cult) started from there eastward consecrating the eastern world as far as the Karatoya (or Karati—Satapatha Brahmana IX. 5. 2. 15) river eventually the fire crossed the Sadanira (Karatoya) and placed Videgha Mathava with his priest Gotama in the country east of that river. From that time Brahmanic influence with all their complex system of sacrifice and social system spread into Assam. Now, Satapatha Brahmana or for the matter of that, the invasion of Kamarupa by the Vedic Indians under their leader Videgha Mathava, is assigned by eminent writers (Weber's History of Indians literature, pp. 116-138) to the later period of the Mahabharata or in any case to the period of the rise and spread of Buddhism in its cradle in country of Kosala Videhas. On the other hand the primitive language religion and social system of the Kalitas of Kamarupa have not yet been fully superseded by the social conditions of the vedic Indians. It cannot, therefore, be supposed that the Assamese civilisation and culture were brought by the Aryans over the mountain passes in the west in recent years ". (Ibid, pp. XLVIII-XLVIX).

**The Kalita Kingdom Beyond The Countries of The
One Eyed And Large Eared Tribes**

The other theory namely, that as the current of Aryan immigration came to Pragjyotisha direct through the north-east finds an indirect support from the tradition of a powerful Kalita empire, already mentioned, existing beyond the Himalayas. The tradition main-

Introduction To Assam

tains that this great Kalita empire still exists, that the Kalita king would one day burst into the Kamarupa kingdom and rule over the whole of it ; and it located the Kalita kingdom as beyond the countries of the *Ethengia* (one-legged) and *Kula-kania* (large eared). Curious enough, the Markandeya Purana also refers to these tribes styled *Ekapada* (one-legged) and *Supa-karna* (large-eared). Even one prose biography of Kamarupa Vaishnavite reformers thus begin the life of Gopal Ata of Bhanipur ; 'Now the character of Bhanipur Ata. His origin is in the Kalita country. He belonged to the house of Koela Kalita, in the village of *Chek-kham-hat-jinqi*. His mother expired. His stepmother... Satya by name belonged to the house of Hari Bar Kalita. Ata was conceived in Bhadra. His father expired in Abin... Having no way out, she left the country and made her escape through the dense forests having crossed the hills and narrow passes, by the Abar and the Miri hills ; she arrived the country of Assam in fifteen days, without food, by the dint of the power of the great saint (Gopal Ata)". Thus, we see that the country of Kalitas lay at a distance of fifteen days journey to the west from the north-east frontier of Assam.

The Kalita Kingdom As Described By Newville

As early as 1828, Captain John Bryan Newville made the following remarks on this point : "The country to the eastward of Bhot and north-ward of Sadiya extending on the plain beyond the mountains is said to be possessed by a powerful nation called Kalitas or Kultas, who are described as having attained to a high degree of advancement and civilization equal to any of the nations of the east. The power, dominion and resources of the Kulta Raja are stated to exceed far those of Assam, under its most flourishing

Introduction To Assam

circumstances, and in former times a communication appears to have been kept up between the estates, now long discontinued. To this nation are attributed the implements of husbandry and domestic life washed down by the flood of the Dihong ... All accounts agree in stating that a colony of Assamese under two sons of a Bura Gohain about eight generations back, took refuge in the country of the Kalitas on the banks of the Sri Lohit ... The plains to the eastward of the Kulta country, beyond the Mishmis is well known as the country of Lama or the Yam Sint Raja, a nation also independent and said to be frequently engaged in hostility with the Kultas. (The Geography and population of Assam, Vol. XVI, pp. 344-45).

The Dihong flood

The flood of the Dihong referred to above is described as follows:—"In the reign of Rajeswar, a sudden and overwhelming flood poured from Dihong inundating the whole country. This flood continued for about 15 days during which time various agricultural and house-hold implements, elephant-trappings and numerous articles belonging to a race evidently social and civilized, of pastoral and agricultural habits, were washed down in the stream. (Ibid, pp. 335-36).

Priesthood of The Kalitas Till Recent Time

Montgomery Martin dwells on the social side of the Kalitas:—"As soon as the Koch became noted in tradition or history we find that they had adopted a priesthood called Kolita or Kolta. They no doubt had some science and continued long to be the spiritual guides of the Koch, and indeed, in some places still retain by far the chief authority over the people ... It is not, therefore, wonderful that in the account of Assam published in the second Volume of the Asiatic Researches, the people of that country are said to be

Introduction To Assam

Assamians or Koltanians, the former the temporal lords, the latter the spiritual guides and then perhaps still more powerful than even now . . . The power of the Kolitas received a severe blow by the introduction of the Kamarupi Brahmans by Visu, the grandson of Hajo, who chose them as his guides in religion . . . Still, however, under the Brahmans, as I have said, they retain much power and more than one of the princes of Vihar have rejected the Brahmans and chosen to return to the guidance of the ancient priesthood. These persons have now entirely adopted the Hindu (Brahmanical) worship and customs and are contented with being considered as pure Sudras . . . They endeavour to pass themselves as Kayosthos and probably all the Barendra Kayosthos are of this origin. There are Brahmans called Assamese. They are Baldiks of Kanyabubja . . . Before their arrival, there were learned men among the Kolitas who were gurus for all people" (The history, antiquities, topography and statistics of Eastern India, vol. III (Rong poor, 1838).

Another Possibility of Pre-Vedic Aryan Immigration Through Tibet

Besides these, the District Gazetteers, Census, and Dalton's Ethnology speak in unequivocal and eloquent terms about the priesthood of the Kalitas till comparatively very recent times. Rajani Kumar Padmapati one of the first and foremost research scholars of Assam even goes to the length of showing that 'swarga' or heaven, whose ruler was Indra, with whom Naraka had fought and Bhagadatta had been friends lay somewhere about the Himalayas or about the Bhot, Aka, Dafala, Miri and Misimi hills at the foot of the Himalayas. So, he thinks that the Kalitas were the inhabitants of the dominions of Indra, and so might be called Kali-Devata or Kalita (Purani Asamat

Ekumuki). Besides "there are innumerable passes (or duars) across the Himalayas and Bhutan Hills between Cooch-Behar and Parasuram Kund, specially on the hills alongside the Kamarup and Darrang districts over which Bhutanese and Tibetan pilgrims come annually to Assam in the cold weather. It may thus be taken for granted that the earliest Aryan settlers marched through Tibet and crossing the Himalayas poured into Assam. (A. G. & Q. A. L., Introduction p. XLIX).

**Seat of an Early Flourishing Civilisation About Tibet
And Old Mountain Passes And High Roads.**

E. I. Rapson gives a vivid account of desiccation of Central Asia :—"Explorations in Baluchistan and Seistan have brought to light the monuments of past civilizations which perished because of the drying up of the land ; and above all, the researches of Sir Aural Stein, in Chinese Turkestan have supplied us with materials and observations, from which it will be possible eventually to write the history of desiccation in this part of the world with some chronological precision. Archaeological evidence proves that this region which is now a rainless desert, in which no living being can exist because of the burning heat and blinding sandstorms in summer, and the arctic cold in winter was once the seat of a flourishing civilization ; and the study of the written documents and works of art discovered at the various ancient sites which have been explored, shows that those sites were abandoned one by one at dates varying from about the first century B.C. to the ninth century A.D. The importance of these observations as bearing on the history of India, lies in the consideration that its present isolation on the land-side was by no means so complete in former times, when the river valleys and mountain passes in the east and west of the Himalayas were open, and

Introduction To Assam

when the great high roads leading from China to India on the east, and from India through Baluchistan or Afghanistan to Persia and so on to Europe on the west not only afforded a constant means of communication, but also permitted the migration of vast multitudes." (Ancient India, pp. 26-28).

Invaders of The East Silently Modifying The Ethnology And Civilization of India

Rapson, appears to be emphatic in confirming the theory of immigration of non-Vedic Aryans through northeast or Tibet when he observes :—"The invaders from the east, greatly as they have modified the ethnology and the languages of India have left no enduring record whether in the advancement of civilization or in literature. Invaders from the west, on the other hand, have determined the character of the whole continent". (Ibid) E. C. Mobbs observes that in the Tons valley and Jaumssar Bawer there are two classes of people viz. Rajputs or Brahmans and the Kalitas; and that among both the classes, marriage which is performed with or without the help of a priest, takes place after the bride has attained puberty, widow marriage too being common. (Indian Forester, vol. LX, Life in a Himalayan valley, pp. 663-799).

The North East Route of Assam Practicable For Large Migration

Sir Edward Galt, often refers to the Kalitas as an Aryan race and speaks of the northeast route of Assam through as the route of the Mongolians :—"Assam is in many ways a country of exceptional interest. Hemmed in, as India is, by the sea on the south-east and south-west, and by the lofty chain of the Himalayas on the north the only route between it and the rest of Asia which are practicable for migration on a large

Introduction To Assam

scale lie on its north-west and north-east confines. The so called Aryans and many later invaders, such as the Greeks, the Huns the Pathans, and the Mughals, entered India from the north-west, while from the north-east, through Assam, have come successive hordes of immigrants from the great hive of the Mongolian race in Western China". (Introduction to first Edition, H.A., pp. VII).

The Ahams And The Koches

"The Ahoms, themselves, are Shans, who according to an eminent authority (* M. Terrien de Couperie, in his 'Introduction to Colquhoun's Amongst the Shans. See also 'The Cradle of the Shan' by the same author) are the outcome of an intermingling of Mons, Negritos and Chinese. The Koches appear to have been originally a Bodo tribe, closely allied to the Meches and Kacharis, but many of them now present the physical characteristics of the Dravidian family." (H. A. Pre-historic and Traditional rulers, p. 2).

No Racial Uniformity in Assam

"The fact, therefore, that excluding immigrants during historic times, a few communities, like the Kalitas, of reputed Aryan descent, and a few others such as the Doms of obvious Dravidian origin, the bulk of the population of the Brahmaputra valley is comprised of tribes whose peculiar dialects belong to the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Indo-Chinese family by no means indicates racial uniformity." (Ibid, p. 2).

Only Kalitas With Distinctly Aryan Appearance

"Although, Aryan languages are now predominant in both the great river valleys this is due mainly to the influence of Hindu priests and to the more advanced character of these languages as compared with the ruder and less efficient tribal dialects ; and the strain

Introduction To Assam

of Aryan blood is very thin. It is, however, apparent in some of the higher castes. The Kalitas of the Brahmaputra valley, who number nearly a quarter of a million, have often a distinctly Aryan appearance, and they are possibly to some extent the descendants of the first Aryan immigrants by women of the country." (Ibid, p. 73.

The Kalitas "In All Things" Superior

That the Kalitas were always an imposing and leading people for their culture, can be well imagined from the contemporaneous short, but critical account of a foreign observer, Sahabuddin who stayed in Assam only for short period of Mir Jumla's invasion in 1662:—"The original inhabitants of the country of two races—the Assamese (i.e. Ahams) and the Kalitas. In all things the latter are superior to the former; but in performing difficult tasks and making a firm stand in battle, the opposite is the case." (Translation by Prof. Jadurath Sarkar, *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research society*, vol. I.P., 179).

Late Aryanisation Kamarupa Baseless

It must be admitted that the bulk of the population of this old country was of non-Aryan origin in very early times and even so it is to-day. The census returns of 1931 also do not show more than ten lacs of people of reputed Aryan descent. The people of Dravidian and Mongolian stock still predominates in Assam. But this in no way proves late Aryanisation of Assam.

THE SPEECH

An Alloy of Aryan And Non-Aryan Speeches

Like the people, their speech in Assam, as in India, or elsewhere, is rather an alloy of the so-called Aryan and non-Aryan. The earliest literature of India is

Introduction To Assam

divided mainly into the Vedic and the popular speeches. The former bears the same relation to the latter which the language of Homer bears to Greek. The popular speech of India in the Vedic times was styled Arsha Apabrahmsa or Arsho Prakrit. The gulf which first divided the written from the spoken speech seemed gradually to be narrowed down when the latter began to influence the former more and more thoroughly even to the extent of modifying the vocabulary and idioms of the written speech to some extent.

The Rise of Sanskrit.

To put a stop to this came Mahes, Yaska, Panini and other grammarians who now did their level best to make the literature 'sanskrit', that is, refined; and according to Macdonnell the use of the word Sanskrit first occurs in the Ramayana by Valmiki (History of Sanskrit literature, p. 22). There appears to be sufficient reason to think that Sanskrit was used as a spoken language in Panini's time or before the fourth century A.C., and that there were differences between idioms used in different provinces; for not Panini alone, but Yaska, Vararuchi Patanjali and other grammarians in following him approved the variations of northern and eastern provinces as correct in alternate forms. They even framed such laws for the spoken dialects too.

Remerging of Sanskrit

And this had its natural consequences. By being thus bound tight hand and foot, Sanskrit not only lost its freedom of movement but also lost its breath soon after. Panini's sway was so thorough that anything not used by him came to be counted as abused, with the result that the writers began to doubt themselves for fear of being scorned and gave up writing under such severe restraints. So the use of Sanskrit came to

Introduction To Assam

be confined within the precincts of academies and the limited circles of scholars to the effect that it became dead or obsolete for all practical purposes (Basan Kumar Chattopadhyaya's Introduction to his edition of Vararuchi's *Prakrita Prakas*, pp. 7-8).

Prakrits Not Derived From Sanskrit

That the Prakrits, so called, are derived from Arsha-Apabhramsa or the spoken language of the Vedic times, and not from Sanskrit which rather arose out of it, has been mentioned above. It is confirmed by the fact that many Vedic uses, not found in Sanskrit, have been preserved in Prakrits; this could never have been the case had Prakrits been derived from Sanskrit. This view is maintained not only by such scholars as Maxmuller, Whitney Colebrook and others in the West, but even ancient scholars of India like Vakpati held this view. Before the Vedic speech came to be discontinued as a spoken language and before it was converted in Sanskrit, Prakrit had been the spoken language, beyond doubt.

Words of Pure Non-Aryan Origin

As already mentioned Prakrit was unquestionably an alloy of the Aryan and non-Aryan speeches and this too was formed as early as the Vedic age. The so-called Desi or indigenous words in modern Indian vernaculars were distinctly of non-Aryan origin for these words, like the manners and customs of the people who kept themselves aloof from the influence of the Aryans, did not suffer modification as a large majority of their company did.

Sanskrit Influence On Prakrits

But Prakrits and Sanskrit were long used side by side. In the dramatic works of Kalidas we find the

Introduction To Assam

kings and nobles using Sanskrit while the common people spoke Prakrits, but nevertheless followed Sanskrit. This had its natural limitations to the disadvantage of Prakrits, namely that Prakrits came to be thoroughly influenced by Sanskrit in vocabulary and grammar. Hence the Sanskritic influence in Prakrit words and uses.

Prakrits As Distinguished From Sanskrit

Prakrits are distinguished from Sanskrit by characteristics peculiar to themselves. Prakrits are simple and sweet, Sanskrit complex and pompous. Pronunciation of Prakrits is easy, while that of Sanskrit is difficult. Predominance is found in Prakrits of vowels, in Sanskrit that of consonants. Use of combined consonants in Prakrits is little, while in Sanskrit it is much. Prakrits are essentially spoken, as Sanskrit is written or literary. Prakrits used to do without grammar, Sanskrit could not (Introduction to Prakrita Prakasa, p. 11).

Sweetness of Prakrit

Bakpati thus eulogises the merits of Prakrits :

*Navamaththa damsanam samntvesa sisirao
vandha riddhio,
Aviralaminomo abhuva-vandhamiha navara
payayasmi.*

That is, Prakrit is the only interesting subject since the beginning of creation. It is rich in its wealth of association and sweetness of expression. Rajasekhar, the poet of *Karpura Manjari* fame also records :

*Parusa sakkiavandha pandavandho vi hoi
suumaro;
Pursamahilanam jettiamihantaram
tettiamimanam.*

Introduction To Assam

That is, Sanskrit is harsh and Prakrit sweet; difference between the two is the same as that between a man and a woman.

Various Definitions of Prakrit

Prakrit has been defined in various ways by scholars of the past to suit their own ideas. For example, those like Hemchandra who are too reverent to Sanskrit and would, therefore, design to have Prakrit as derived from it, would define,

"Prakritih, Samskritam tata agatam tatra bhavamba Prakritam";

"Prakritih Samskritam tatra bhavatuat Prakritam smritam."

"Prakritih Samskritam tad vikritih Prakritam."

But others would simply say that it is so named only because it is Prakrit or natural as opposed to Sanskrit, for example, which is comparatively artificial.

"Prakritya syabhavena sidhamti Prakritam."

"Prakrita jananam bhasha Prakritam."

Prakrit As The Source And End of Sanskrit

Vakpati, the great poet of the eighth century thus refers to the nature of Prakrit :

*"Savalao imam vaya visanti etto va nenti vavao ;
Enti samuddamchiya nenti savaraochchiya jalam"*
V. 93.

That is, 'just as the water (as rain) returns to the sea after emerging out of it (as vapour) so do all languages enter into Prakrit after departing from it.' This is very significant, for Vakpati would thus impress on us that Prakrit is not born of any other language ; on the other hand, Sanskrit which had its origin in Prakrit at last merged in Prakrit. Or, more clearly still, Sanskrit controlled by Panini and other gram-

Introduction To Assam

marians of his time, came out of the dialects then spoken by the people; and while Sanskrit became a dead language in their hands, Prakrit survived Sanskrit.

Long Stages of Prakrit

Thus, Prakrits were grown up while the Vedic speech was yet in its cradle, and it got commerce with Sanskrit till the latter was smothered by the extremely strict rules of Panini. But, at any rate it must have cost Prakrit a pretty long time to get itself distributed through the length and breadth of Aryavarta and to have come to the stage in which we find it now. Prakrits long remained as spoken dialects before it came to be used in literature by Buddha and Jain Tirthankar Mahavir.

Pali, One of The Earliest Forms of Prakrit

Pali, is undoubtedly one of the earliest forms of Prakrit having been used in literature at least since sixth century B.C. Scholars are unanimous on the point that its name is comparatively far later than the language itself. A story is told in regard to its use in Buddhist scriptures. One of his disciples complained to Buddha that the latter's teachings were defiled by being spoken in the common dialect. Buddha expresses his view contrary, to the expectation of the disciple and ordered that his teachings on no account should be put in Sanskrit. One who does so must be considered as committing a '*dukkata or duskriti*' (evil deed). Buddha definitely insisted on recording his teachings in the people's own speech (Rhys David's Vinaya Texts, Pt. III, pp. 149-50).

Pali And Its Earlier Names

The name 'Pali', as referred to above, is of comparatively later origin (Childer's Introduction to his Pali Dictionary). Aswaghosha, who flourished in the

Introduction To Assam

fifth century A.C., called this language Magadhi from the fact of its being the native speech of Magadha. In the days of Buddha himself it was called Sakaya Niruktiya or Saka Nirukti (one's own language). Buddhists believe that it was the earliest speech of the world and a new born baby when left to itself would speak this language (Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. Satish Chandra Vidyabhushan's Introduction to Pali Grammar, pp. 30-31).

Pali, Its Original Meaning And Later Extended Meaning

The original meaning of the word Pali in Magadhi was a line or a sentence, corresponding to Sanskrit 'Pankti'. As the latter word was often used to signify any original matter of a Brahmanic scripture, so the former word was employed to mean any original matter of the Tripitakas. And, just as both the original Samhitās and the Brahmanas correlated with them came to be termed as the Vedas, in the same way the earlier works of Manu and the later works connected with them came to be known as Smṛiti; so any Buddhist works related with the Tripitakas, directly or even indirectly, came to be called Pali. Later, Pali came to mean the language in which the Tripitakas were written, whether that language was now employed in a work connected with the Tripitakas or not. Like Prakrit, Pali has also been defined in a large number of ways (for example it is said to be derived from *Palli*, meaning a village; and so Pali meaning a language of the folk people, etc.). But they are all forced and fanciful; and Pali means nothing but the language in which the Tripitakas were written. (Vidhu Sekher Sastri's *Pravesek* or Introduction to Pali Prakas).

Pali And Prakrit Versus Sanskrit

Just as the Buddhists used Pali in their religious works at the bidding of Buddha himself, and would

Introduction To Assam

never tolerate Sanskrit, and as the Jains employed another Prakrit for their religious works similarly against Sanskrit ; so the Brahminists used Sanskrit alone in their works and would despise both Pali and Prakrit of the Buddhists and Jainists. In the Garurha Purana (Purvakhandā, 98|17) there is such an injunction to all the twice-born castes never to use or hear Prakrit which is degrading and befits only the Mlechchas.

"Lokayatam Kutarkancha Prakritam Mlechchabhāshitam ;

Na srotavyam dvija naitadadhonayati laddvijam."

Rise of The Gatha Language

But, such hostilities in their extremes by their nature are bound to be short-lived, especially, when they have to live under the same roof ; just as the Brahminists and Muhammadans in the same land long fighting against each other, had at last been compelled to learn to respect each other, and even to follow some broad principles of each other's religion. That was the case in this matter too. A compromise was soon effected, culminating in acknowledgment of Buddha as an incarnation by the Brahminists, and in the learning and employment of Sanskrit by the Buddhists and Jainists. This gave rise to a new form of language, rather a mixture of Pali, Prakrit and Sanskrit known as *Gatha*. This is exemplified in such works as *Lalit Vistar*.

Four Forms of Prakrit Described by Vararuchi

1. Maharashtra

Although, we hear of eighteen forms of Prakrit, Vararuchi the great Prakrit grammarian describes the characteristics of four forms of Prakrit, namely, Maharashtra, Sauraseni, Magadhi and Paisachi. Vara-

Introduction To Assam

ruchi maintains that Maharashtri is the best and worthiest of all other forms to be used in literature and so describes the nature of this Prakrit in the first nine chapters of his Prakrita grammar. It is not exactly known in which particular province Maharashtri Prakrit grew up. Professor Jacobi opines that this form of Prakrit was prevalent in that Maharashtra country whose capital was at Pratisthan ; while Dr. Hoernle maintains that since Maharashtri Prakrit bears no resemblance what so ever with Marathi, we should take it as the old language of the elite and gentry of the whole of Aryavatra. Whatever this may be, it was in the Maharashtri Prakrit that Setuvandha, Gaudavadh, Kumarpal Charit and other great Kavyas were composed.

ii. Sauraseni iii. Magadhi

The jurisdiction of Sauraseni Prakrit is identified with the province of Surasen or Mathura where it was in use as a spoken dialect. It was employed as the vehicle of expression of high class women characters in dramatic literature. Karpura Manjari, by the great poet Rajasekhar, is a drama in Sauraseni Prakrit. The Magadhi Prakrit was of course the speech of Magadha or Behar.

iv. The Areas of Paisachi Speaking People

The Paisachi as the name suggests, is said to be the Prakrit in a deformed manner, used by the non-Aryan speakers. Lakshmidhar, the author of *Sharh-Bhasha Chandrika* thus locates the areas where this was used :

*" Pandya-Kekaya-Bahlika-Sahya-Nepala - Kun-
talah ;*

*Sudesa-Bhota-Gandhara-Haiva-Kannojanasta-
tha.*

Ete Pisacha desah syuh

Introduction To Assam

The areas Pandya (on the southern shore, including modern Madura and Kumari), Kekaya (birth place of Kekayee in the Province of Panchanad), Bahlik (the province of Afghanistan to the west of Kandahar), Sahya (on the western shore of southern India including Kolhapur and Goa), Nepal (hills to the north of Oudh and Tirhut), Kuntal (from where the Narmada rises and which country is said have had Vidarbha as its capital city), Bhota (The Bhutan hills to the north of Assam), Gandhar (the birth place of Gandhari to the west of the Indus and including Kabul and Peshawar), Haiva (inhabitants of Nepal and Bhutan, at the foot of the Himalayas, known as Haiyu) Kannojan (inhabitants of the hills of south Maharashtra known as Kunajan, who are said to have been originally Muhammadans, but, have since adopted Hindu forms of prayer, now declare themselves as Hindus. (Introduction to Vararuchi's Prakrita Prakas, pp. 22-23).

Paisachi of Doubtful Existence.

It does not seem likely that one and the same form of Prakrit could thus be distributed over the extreme north, south, east and west of India. So, it is doubtful whether there had been any such Prakrit in existence. Sten Konow, the reputed editor of *Karpura Manjari* thinks that Paisachi Prakrit was in vogue in Ujjain in ancient times (Royal Asiatic Society's Journal, 1909). Dr. Grierson also wrote a work on the subject, namely " Pisacha Languages of N. W. India."

Six, Eighteen And Even 27 Forms Of Prakrit Mentioned

Lakshmidhar, the author of 'Sharh Bhasha Chandrika,' succeeded Vararuchi and describes six forms of Prakrit while the Sabda-Kalpadruma mentions eighteen forms as follows :--

Introduction To Assam

Sanskrita, Prakrita, Udichi, Maharashtri, Magadhi, Misrardha, Magadhi, Sakabhiri, Sravasti, Draviri, Odriya, Paschatya, Prachya, Bahlika, Rantika, Dakshinatya, Paisachi, Avanti, Sauraseni. Nagendradra-nath Vasu Prachyavidyamaharnava quotes Prakrita Chandrika by Pundit Sesha Chandra to mention even twenty seven forms of Prakrit (Vangiya Sahitya Parishat Pratrika, 1317 B.E.):--

'Maharashtri tathavanti Saurasenyardha

Bahliki Magadhi ohatva sharhe ta dakshinat-
yajah.

Brachanda Lata Valdarbhabupa nagarau;
Barbaravantya Panchala Takka Malava Kai-

Gaurhodra Datva Paschatya Pandya Kauntala
Simhalah;

Kalinga Prachya Karnata Kancha Dravirha
Gaurjjarah.

Abhiro Madhya deshiyah sukshma veda
vavasthitah;

Sapta vimsatyapabhramsah Vairhladi
prabhedatah".

This seems a mere swelling of number for its own sake.

Descent Of Modern Indian Vernaculars

Dr. Hoernle attempts to trace the descent of the modern Indian vernaculars from the various Prakrits. For example, he traces the growth of Sindhi and Maravari from Abhiri; Rajputani from Avanti, Gujarati from Gurjari; Panjabi from Bahliki; west Hindi from Sauraseni; east Hindi (Maithili) from Magadhi (Prachya); Urhiya from Odriya; Bengali from Gaurhi; Marathi from Dakshinatya (Valdarbhi) and Nepali from Paipall.

Gaurhi, No Prakrit; Magadhi And Old Bengali

While, Hoernle holds the view that Bengali is descended from Gaurhi, Professor Macdonnell opines

Introduction To Assam

that Bengali is derived from Magadhi. Prakrita-Sarvasva by Markandeya Kavindra (Vizagapatam Edition, p. 122) defines Gaurhi as having prominence in compounds—"Samasadhya Gaurhi". Also, the Sahitya Darpana describes Gaurhi a gorgeous style having prominence in compounds. Hence, Gaurhi seems to be no Prakrit at all. But, Magadhi is generally acknowledged to be the source of Bengali, with three main characteristics of the former revealed in the latter. They are: (1) of S', Sh, and S, only the first pronunciation is found in the Magadhi and so also in Bengali; (2) The Magadhi used 'i' or 'e' as the first case-ending, and so old Bengali; (3) Magadhi used 'ia' in lieu of Sanskrit 'ktas', and Bengali; used 'ia' for the same (Introduction to Pali Prakas, pp. 26-27).

No Prakrit Assigned To Kamarupi Or Old Assamese

Scholars are consistent in their silence on the point of Kamarupi or old Assamese language which is barely mentioned save by a few modern scholars. Hence, we really now no Prakrit to which Kamarupi or Assamese could be assigned. Modern scholars like Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji, the great author of 'Origin and Development of the Bengali Language', who mentions Assamese assign to it the Magadhi Prakrit for they consider Assamese as forming one group with Bengali and Oriya. As already seen, it was not even long decided to which Prakrit Bengali really belonged.

Possibility Of Kamarupa Having A Prakrit Distinct From Magadhi

This silence in regard to the Prakrit to which Kamarupi or old Assamese belonged seems eloquent on some points. We have already shown how powerful a kingdom Pragjyotish or Kamarupa had been from before the times of the Kurukshetra war down to the

Introduction To Assam

British period; so it cannot be dismissed summarily by saying that it was an insignificant matter not worth any notice. Far from it Hieun Tsiang's celebrated record that the language of it "differs a little from that of mid-India" is a challenge to any one who would jump to any hasty conclusion. Can we not say with reason that this is a great testimony of the fact that whatever Prakrit was there in Kamarupa, it was something else than the Magadhi or mid-India Prakrit; and that Kamarupa had distinct Prakrit, whatever its name, of her own? In absence of further proof let us call it Kamarupi Prakriti. Suffice it to say at this stage of our discourse that there was no air-tight compartment between the different Prakrits, as we have already seen, and characterisation of a distinct Prakrit for Kamarupa should not preclude us from finding some points common with other Prakrits, as Magadhi or Sauraseni.

The Earlier Records Of India, Indo-European

Now, despite what we have said about an alloy being formed of Aryan and non-Aryan speeches, there is decidedly no denying the fact that "the language of all the earliest records of India; whether literary or inscriptional, is Indo-European in character. "That is to say, it is related to Greek and Latin and to our English tongue, and not to the earliest forms of speech it supplanted in India. . . . It shows, too, that, in the course of time when a community becomes settled and civilization advances, the dialect of some particular district, which has won special importance as a centre of religion, politics, or commerce, gradually acquires an ascendancy over the others and is eventually accepted by general consent as the standard language of educated people and of literature; and that when its position is thus established its use tends to supersede that of the other dialects. . . .

Introduction To Assam

Vedic Literature Dates At Least 1200 B.C.

"In India, such a standard or literary language appears first in the hymns of the Rig Veda, the most ancient of which probably date from a period at least 1200 years before the Christian era. This "Vedic" Sanskrit is the language of priestly poets who lived in the region now known as southern Afghanistan, the North-western frontier province, and the Punjab; and it differs from the latter "classical" Sanskrit rather more perhaps than the language of Chaucer from that of Shakespeare." (Rapson's Ancient India, pp. 9-10).

Indo-European One Of The Four Known Families Out Of About A Hundred Families Of Languages

Groups of speeches tied together by common affinities of vocabulary and grammar are known as families of languages. The sub-groups having some special traits in common, besides the general characteristics of the family are called sub-families or branches. As the fact of living together in a certain place is responsible for the general characteristics of a family so the fact of being separated by some natural barriers as a mountain or a river is responsible for differences in their features. Spoken dialects change and new languages come into being only due to such factors. There is said to exist about a hundred different families of speech on the surface of the earth; but up till now only the sub-groups or branches of four families of speech have been fully identified. They are the Hemitic, the Semitic, the Ural-Altic and the Indo-European families of languages (The History of the English language, by Emerson). Of these we are just now concerned mainly with the last.

Indo-European Family Leaving Their Original Home

Whether, in their Arctic home (Lokamanya Tilak's Arctic Home of the Vedas) or in the highest elevation

Introduction To Assam

of central Asia (Max Muller's *Science of Language*, Vol. I, p. 289) or in the southern Russia (George Howell's *Soul of India*, p. 28), the speakers of about eight groups of Indo-European languages as Germanic or Teutonic, Altic, Italic, Hellenic, Balto-Slavonic, Zend, and Indo-Iranian appear to have lived together before they marched out group by group and became the parent stock of those speakers in different centuries of Europe and Asia. (Classen's *Outlines of History of the English language*). Of these the first four, namely the Teutonic, Celtic, Italic and Hellenic seem the first to leave their original home for the countries they have since occupied. (Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India*). According to Grierson, the peculiarities of this first batch is the pronunciation of 's' as 'k' e.g. Sanskrit 'Satam', Latin 'Kentum'. "Most of the former who used some word cognate to Latin centum (i.e. Kentum) for the numeral 'hundred' became the parent of that spoken by the Greek, Latin, Celtic and Teutonic races". (L.S.I.). But Schleicher opines that Celts are the first to leave their original home and they were followed by the Tuto-Shav, the Greek-Hellenic and then the Indo-Iranians in order.

Indo-European 'Kentum' Group Pecularity In Assamese

Again, according to Grierson, the second batch of the Indo-European speakers who left their original home were characterized by their pronunciation of 'k' as 's' e.g. Latin 'canis' Sanskrit 'Swan', which pronunciation the Indo-European speakers in their home have since adopted. Indo-Iranians and Albanians are among others who are included in this batch. Dr. Ulenbeck supports this when he says; "The Indo-German 'k' became 's' (s) in the Aryan period". This groups may be called the 'Satam' and the former 'Kentum'. But, there are many non-Sanskritic words in Assamese which

Introduction To Assam

really belong to the Kentum rather than to 'Satam' group of which Indo-Aryan or Sanskrit is a member. The type of such Assamese words is 'dak' (to bite or sting) equivalent to Sanskrit 'Dams' and Greek (a member of the Kentum group) 'damkam'. This point has been broadly illustrated by Devananda Bharali in his *Assamiya Bhashar Maulik Vichar* (second edition, pp., 14-20).

Indo-Europaen X Sound In Assamese

Another peculiarity of Assamese is its X pronunciation of the letters s', sh and s. Casual critics would dismiss it in one phrase by attributing it to non-Aryan predominance.' But, those who are familiar with both the people and speech of this country will soon realise that it is the non-Aryans mainly who find it difficult to pronounce this X sound, which is an intermediate sound between kh and h, and they would either pronounce it as the former or as the latter. On the authority of Dr. Sunitikumar Chatterji, among others, we know that the X pronunciation was there in the original Indo-European family of speech:—"It seems that in certain forms of O.I.A. (old Indo-Aryan) the X sound was the actually one employed for 'sh' as can be inferred from a mediaeval pronunciation of 'sh' as 'kh' being the nearest M.I.A. approximation to the traditional X (Origin and Development of the Bengali Language).

X Sound Also Present In Iranian And A Few Other Indian Languages

This X pronunciation according to Dr. Chatterji remained in the Vedas as in "TataX king". Bharali gives a long list of words from Iranic, Dardic and Avesta, besides the Germanic and Greek words showing its Indo-Germanic origin and its continuation through the Indo-Iranian period (A.B., M.V., pp., 21-23). He

further shows the existence of this pronunciation in some of the old Indian languages, and thus rather supports Dr. Chatterji who says, "The change of initial, intervocal and final 's' to the guttural spirant (X) in Assamese is some thing remarkable and is paralleled by what we see in Sinhalese and Kashmiri. This is also noticeable in Iranian, Hellenic and Celtic." (O. D. B. L.).

Indo-European Change Of 'D' To 'J' In Assamese

Bharali, also, shows instances in Assamese of change of 'd' to 'j' without the addition Y, as in: Sans. 'dah' (to Sans. 'duhitri' (daughter), Asm. 'jiyari' (daughter) and so forth. Here is something of a remnant of old Indo-Aryan or Indo-Germanic, characteristic; as Dr. Chatterji puts it: "Change of 'd' to 'j' through the influence of a near palatal vowel is an extremely rare phenomenon in Indo-Aryan although change of dy, dhy, to 'j' and 'jh' is regular law" (O.D.B.L.).

Absence Of Cerebrals In Assamese As Indo-European.

Inter-change of 'p' and 'k' and 'b' and 'g' and absence of cerebrals in Assamese have been shown by Bharali (A.B.M.V., p. 73) as pre-Vedic or Indo-Germanic characteristics. Of course such optional forms *kakardu*, *kapardu*; *kulika*, *pulika* are also said to be in Vedic use. Macdonnell also opines:—"The cerebrals are mainly Indian products. They are rare in the Rig Veda where they occur medially and finally only". (Vedic grammar). Bhandarkar seems to hold the same view:—"The characteristics of not changing dentals to cerebrals and even the dentalising of cerebrals would appear to be truly Aryan. It might be due to an Aryan tribe that remained longer in the original seat of the race and emigrated to India at a late period and settled on the borders." (Philological Essays).

The Naraka Legend In West India Among Non-Vedic Aryans

All these evidences may point to the conclusion already hinted that a current of pre-Vedic or non-Vedic Aryans entered Assam either through the north-east gate as most of the Asamese scholars opine; or as European scholars like Pargiter and Rhys Davis (in his *Buddhist India*) think, a race of non-Vedic Aryans came by the foot of the Himalayas and being unable, however, to settle in central India went to extreme west and extreme east of India and settled there. Any way, the Kalitas Assam in all probability belonged to this race of non-Vedic Aryans, and king Naraka possibly hailed from this race. Nagendranath Basu, the reputed author of *Viswa Kosh*, mentions that Naraka once ruled in Sindh and Cutch, a tradition highly afloat in those countries (*Social History of Kamarupa*). Even the Sanskrit *Ramāyana* (Bombay Edition, Kishkindhya Cando, ch. 42) refers to king Naraka as ruling in western India. This simply shows that the Naraka tradition of east also prevailed in west India among this one and the same band of non-Vedic Aryans or that their line settling in the west also named their ruler Naraka after this great Naraka of the east.

Asur, Rigvedic Meaning 'God' Applied To The Non-Vedic Aryans

We have already discussed other aspects of the 'Asur' designation of Naraka, saying, that he had neither non-Aryan origin nor such breeding. On the authority of Macdonnell we know: "In the Rig veda, 'Asur' was predominantly, a designation of the gods. So both 'Sur' and 'Asur' had the same meaning originally. This prefix 'a' does not necessarily mean 'non' for in Assamese we have a large number of such pairs of words as *Kumari*, *akumari*; *vihane*, *avihane*; *plavtt*,

Introduction To Assam

aplavit ; and so forth, exactly synonymous, and never antonymous. Thus 'Sur' and 'Asur' are synonymous applied later to distinguish the Vedic from the non-Vedic Aryans.

Assamese, One Of The 15 Major Languages Of India

To return to language. Sir Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India enumerates 179 languages and 544 dialects. Dr. Chatterji examines this enumeration of languages and finds as many as 116 of the number as "small tribal speeches belonging to the Tibeto-Chinese speech family which are found only on the northern and north-eastern fringe of India". He adds:—"For literature, for education, for public life we have only 15 major or literary languages in India namely Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Oriya, Marathi, Gujarati, Sindhi, Kashmiri, Punjabi, Nepali, Assamese, and the four great Dravidian speeches Telugu, Kanada, Tamil and Malayalam". (Languages and the Linguistic Problem, Oxford Pamphlet series, no. II, pp. 4-5).

Negroid And Proto-Australoid Speeches Leave Little trace

"Probably, no kind of man evolved from some type of anthropoid ape on the soil of India, but India became the home of various races which came from outside, and was a great clearing house of various peoples. The oldest people to have settled in India were a Negroid or Negrito race from Africa, who died out leaving very little trace : they survive with their language in the Andaman islands. The proto-Australoids, long-headed dark-skinned snub-nosed, then came from Palestine, and they furnished some of the present-day lower classes all over India : they passed into Ceylon and through Burma and Malaya into Australia. Their language does not survive.

Introduction To Assam

Austrie Culture Developed In India And Their Language Spread Outside India

"Next, we have the Austries, long-headed, comparatively fair, straight nosed, who settled largely in north India and mingled to some extent with the proto-Australoids. According to one view, they came from Indo-China ; but another view, which seems to be the more likely one, regards them as a very old branch of the Mediterranean race who came to India through Mesopotamia in pre-historic times. There Austries developed their culture in India, and groups of them passed into Burma and Indo-China, into Malay and Indonesia, and even beyond into the islands of Melanesia and Polynesia. They mingled outside India with Negritos, with Proto-Australoids and Mongoloids, and their languages changed to Mon and Khemer and other speeches in Indo-China, into Malay and its sister speeches in the Islands of the Indian archipelago and into various Melanesian and Polynesian dialects.

Austrie Speakers In India

"In India, Austrie speakers of the plains have entirely abandoned their original speech for the Aryan language which came to the country after 1500 B.C., the latter itself being modified by them to some extent ; and they have been transformed into the present-day masses of northern India along with the Dravidian speaking peoples who came to live with them later. Austrie dialects survive in India in some out-of-the-way places, in the hills and jungles of central and north-eastern India. Austrie speakers do not form more than 1.3 per cent of the total population of India, numbering some five millions in all

The Dravidian Speakers In Northern India

"Following the Austries, we have Dravidian speakers coming to India before 3500 B.C. They are believed

to have comprised two distinct races with one language, the long-headed civilized Mediterraneans and the short-headed Armenoids from Asia Minor. These Mediterranean Dravidians are believed to have come from the Aegean islands and Asia Minor, and were of the same Aegean race as in pre-Hellenic Greece ; and in India they built up the great city culture of Sindh and south Punjab (C. 3250-2750 B.C.). They spread over western and southern India and penetrated into Gangetic India also, where they came in touch with the Austriacs, hostile or friendly. They with the Austriacs supplied some of the fundamental bases of Hindu religion and civilization, and when the Aryans came and spread over northern India, the Dravidians and Austriacs both accepted the Aryans' language, and the three groups of people, Austric, Dravidian and Aryan, were fused into one people, the Aryan-speaking north Indian Hindu of ancient times.

**The Four Literary Dravidian Languages In India.
And Ceylon**

"The diversity of speech in north-India was perhaps the Aryan's opportunity to spread his language ; he was not so successful in the south, with its solid blocks of Dravidian languages. At the present day, the Dravidian languages are mainly confined to the south, with some remnants in northern and central India, and they are current among 71 millions, forming 20 per cent of the Indian people. There are four great literary or cultivated Dravidian languages viz. (1) Telugu or Andhra (over 26 millions), (2) Kannada or Karnatak (over 11 millions) (3) Tamil (nearly 20 millions in India, (2 millions settled in Ceylon,) and (4) Malayalam or Kerala (over 9 millions), besides a number of uncultivated speeches ; but all these four freely go to Sanskrit the classic and religious language of India, for words of higher culture. Their

Introduction To Assam

Sanskrit vocabulary furnishes these Dravidian speeches with a very manifest common platform with all the great literary languages of the north, excepting Urdu." (L. L. P., Ox. Pm. pp. 5-9).

The Aryan Speech—The Great Spiritual And Cultural Link With The West

"Finally, we come to the great Aryan speech of India our great spiritual and cultural link with the West. The primitive Indo-Europeans, of whom the Aryans were a branch, developed their language and culture in the Eurasian tracts south of the Ural mountains 3000 B.C. and one band of them came to the northern Mesopotamian regions 2500 B.C. from where they passed on to India via Iran. It is believed that the Indo-European speakers too, like the Dravidians, were made up of two distinct races, the Nordic long-headed Indo-Europeans proper, and the short-headed Alpines; Aryan speech came in various waves from the west, and it gradually spread over the Punjab and the Ganges Valley, the Dravidian and Austric speeches receding before it, so that gradually the whole of north India, including Assam, and a good deal of northern Deccan became Aryan in speech.

The Rise Of The Modern Indo-Aryan Languages

"The Aryan speech in its earliest phase (old Indo-Aryan) in India is represented by the language of the Rig veda, compiled probably in the tenth century B.C. but portions of it are much older. A younger form of this old Aryan speech in India became established as Sanskrit, the great religious and culture language of Hindu India, by 500 B.C. The later spoken forms of the Aryan speeches in the stage known as Middle Indo-Aryan are represented by various Prakrits (including Pali) and Apabhraṃsas period from 600 B.C. to A.D.

Introduction To Assam

1000, after which these develop into the new or modern Indo-Aryan languages of the present day, Sanskrit became the great vehicle of ancient Indian culture and it spread into the lands of greater India—Burma, Indo-China and Indonesia and Serindia or central Asia of ancient times and was studied in Tibet, China, Korea and Japan also. It has become the natural feeder of all Indian languages whenever they wanted new words, for the last 2,500 years." (Ibid, p. 9-10).

The Sino-Tibetan Or Tibeto-Chinese Speakers

"..... The Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese speakers, belonging to the Mongoloid race, came after the Aryans They appear to have spread from their primitive home in north-western China about the middle of the first millenium B.C. into Tibet and in the subsequent centuries they penetrated through the Himalayan regions and the plains of north and east Bengal and the hills and plains of Assam. They were all in a backward state and contributed very little in the evolution of Indian culture. Tibetan and Burmese became literary languages through contact with Indian Aryan literature. In the plains, the Sino-Tibetan tribes (e.g. the Bodos) gave up and are giving up their languages for modern Aryan speeches (Ibid, p. 9).

Three Periods Of Indo-Aryan Languages

Considering the main phonetic and morphological trend of the Indo-Aryan language in general, its history is divided into three periods, viz. (1) old Indo-Aryan, from the time of composition of the vedic hymns (?1500 B.C. ?1200 B.C.) to the times preceding Gautama Buddha (557-477 B.C.); (2) Middle Indo-Aryan, from 600 B.C. to about 1000 A.C.; and (3) New Indo-Aryan the first few centuries after 1000 A.C. during

Introduction To Assam

which the New Indo-Aryan languages came into being (Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji's *Origin and Development of the Bengali language*, p. 16).

Characterization Of Each Of The Three Periods

O. I. A. is said to be characterized by the language being "most copious in both its sounds and forms", M. I. A. by "a movement towards simplification of older consonant groups and a general curtailment of grammatical forms", and N. I. A. by the old simplifying tendencies working themselves out and "the old inflectional system having been worn down to a few meagre forms". And, while the Vedic and Sanskrit languages form "the typical and representative languages" of the first period, and "the various Prakrits of the earlier inscriptions beginning with those of Asoka, Pali, and the Prakrits of literature" represent the samples of the second, while at the confluence of the second and the third periods, we have the literary apabhraṃsas, and these apabhraṃsas of literature are based on hypothetical spoken apabhraṃsas, in which the earlier Prakrits die and the Bhashas or modern Indo-Aryan languages have their birth" (Ibid, pp. 16-17.).

Pre-Vedic Vocabulary In Assamese

We have already entertained the possibility of a race of pre-Vedic or non-Vedic Aryans entering Assam from north-east through Tibet or a current of them coming from north or north west and distributing themselves in western and eastern India, the latter particularly meaning Pragjyotisha or ancient Assam. We have also quoted many instances of pre-Vedic uses still extant in Assamese in particular, from Assamiya Bhasha Maulik Vichar. For example, the absence of cerebrals in Assamese are worthy of special note; for scholars like Macdonell opine:—"The cerebrals are entirely secondary, being a specially Indian product

Introduction To Assam

and unknown in the Indo-European period. They are probably due to aboriginal, especially, Dravidian influence". (Vedic Grammar, 8). We may quote here a few instances of pre-Vedic vocabulary in Assamese from Kaliram Medhi (Assamese Grammar and Origin of the Assamese Language, pp. XXIII-XXV): *Asm. Abu* (grandmother), *Lt. av-us* (grand-father); *Lt. avia* (grandmother); *Asm. Ata* (grandfather), *Gk* and *Lt. atta* (salutation used to old man equivalent to father), *Goth, Attan* (father); *Asm. Uruk* (thrilling sound uttered by women in concert on auspicious occasions), *Lt. Ululo* (to howl), *Gk. Ololuzo* (howl), *V. Ulult* (howling); *Asm. Geri* (shout), *Gk. Gerys* (voice) and *gervo* (I proclaim); *Poah* (the young of an animal or bird) *Lt. Puellus, Puella* (a boy, a girl), and *Pulhus* (the young of an animal), *Asm. Mina. Lt. Mina* (ornament of gold) and so forth.

Vedic Vocabulary In Assamese

The same work, Assamese Grammar and Origin of Assamese Language, gives another list of Vedic vocabulary in Assamese besides Vedic forms in use. A few of such words are: *Asm. Avati* (a women having husband), *V. Ayaji* (woman having husbands. RK. 1, 28, 7); *Kharu* (anklets or armlets), *V. Khadi* (anklets or armlets or sometimes rings on the hands,, RK. V. 54,11 etc., etc. *Asm. Nirgat* (shameless) *V. Nigut* (enemy, non-Aryan foe; Rk. IX, 97, 53-54); *Asm. Palu*, (cater pillar) *V. Plusi* ("name of some moxious insect in Rig Veda"); *Asm. Beji* (a needle *V. Vesti* (a needle; Rk. VII, 18, 17); *Asm. Bhem* (pride ostensation), *V. Bhema* (to take pride: Rk. 1, 11, 2); *Asm. Mena* (drooping horned buffalo), *V. Mena* (lit. female of an animal, either mare or cow; Rk. 1,627) and so forth.

Tatsama, Tatbhava And Deshi Words

Now, general vocabulary in modern Indian languages are divided into three classes, namely, Tatsama

Introduction To Assam

(or Sanskrit), Tatbhava (derived from Sanskrit), and Desi (indigenous). Of these the first two may be classed as of Aryan and the third as of non-Aryan origin. Rev. Nathan Brown, the reputed author of *Grammatical Notes on the Assamese language*, 1848, made an attempt to find out the percentage of words of different languages in the composition of Assamese, and he leaves the following record : Aka 7, Burmese 5, Khamti 1, Abar 1, Mishimi 23, and Sanskrit 63 (*Jonaki* vol. III). This neither appears to be scientific nor accurate ; at any rate, we know from here that Assamese by far has a lower percentage of Sanskrit and a high percentage of indigenous words.

Magadhi And Assamese

Assamese, like Bengali, is regarded as a member of the Indic group of the Indo-Iranian or Aryan branch of the Indo-European family of languages, and with its sister-speech, Assamese. Assamese is said to form the eastern-most language in the I. E. linguistic area just as the Celtic, Irish and the Germanic Icelandic are the westernmost (*O.D.B.L.*, Introduction, p.1.). Again Assamese has been regarded as one of the modern representatives of Magadhi Apabhramsa with Bengali, Oriya, Magadhi Maithil and Bhoj puriya (*Ibid*, p., 91). And, all this seems to have been said from the present geographical and political situation of Assam without any special consideration of its particular ancient geography and political and linguistic peculiarities. We have already said enough in regard to the two former and few remarks may suffice for the present in regard to the last.

The Magadhi Prakrit prefers 'S' to 'sh' or 's' among all these letters, while old Assamese shows preference to 'sh' "being the nearest M.I.A. approximation to the traditional X" (*Dr. Chatterji's O.D.B.L.*). This is best

Introduction To Assam

illustrated in the Charyas, two lines from which are quoted:—

*"Duhila dudha ki vente shamay;
Nite nite shial shih sham fujat".*

Assamese Preference Of 'Sh' To The Magadhi Preference 'S' Of 'S'

Here for 'samat' (enters) we have "shamai", for 'sial' (Jackal). We have 'shial' and for "sih" 'sam' we have 'shih' and "sham" respectively, as contrasted with Magadhi which would use 's' for 'sh' and 's'. But, in the Prahrad Charit, a pre-Vaishnavite work of 12th century, we find preferences shown to 's' instead of 'sh' or 's'.

Magadhi Influence Of Assamese Is Of Later Times

But, despite this fact we find, Magadhi elements in Assamese as in "r" changing to "c" (H.C. IV. 288) and in the use of Assamese adverbs 'etia', "tetia" etc. from Magadhi, "ettiae", "tettiae" etc. This superficial influence of Magadhi on Assamese seems to have come at a later period when the vedic Aryans emigrated to Assam from Videha or Kanauj or in the historic period since the reign of Viswa Simha. But, this was at a later stage, and we have held that a stream of pre-Vedic or non-Vedic Aryans came to this country and founded the language which is decidedly Aryan in character. The representatives of this stream of non-Vedic Aryans, we have already shown, are the Kalitas, perhaps, whose early king Naraka. We may conclude this point of early Aryan settlement by once more quoting from Col. Dalton:

Col. Dalton On Kalitas

It appears from the earliest notices of Kamrup that the Aryans who first occupied it were subsequently re-

Introduction To Assam

garded as infidels by their western brethren. . . The older head-priests were probably Kalitas, who called themselves Kaists. It appears certain that there were no Brahmins with the earlier Aryan colonists. (Dalton's *Ethnology of Bengal*, pp. 77-82).

Non-Aryan Influence Over Assamese (I) Austro-Asiatic And (II) Dravidian

(III) Sino-Tibetan Or Tibeto-Chinese, And Its Branches

There are the three non-Aryan groups of speeches viz. the Austric, the Dravidian and the Mongolian which leave some trace over Assamese. The Austro-Nesian branch of the Austric group as already mentioned, is not represented in Assam, while of the Austro-Asiatic branch the Monkhemer (Khasi and Munda (Mundari) Santali etc.) families are well represented. They must consequently have had enough influence over Assamese. Of the Dravidian influence we cannot be so sure nor do we know certain which of its four branches viz. Tamil, Telegu, Malayalam and Kanarese were predominant. The Mongolian group is represented by the Indo-Chinese or Tibeto-Chinese family with its two sub-families viz. the Tibeto-Burmese and the Tai-Chinese. The Tibeto-Burman sub-family divides itself into many branches as (1) the Tibeto-Himalayan branch including the Bhotia speech of Tibet; (2) the North Assam branch embracing the Miri, Mishimi, Abar and Dafia dialects, and (3) the Assam-Burmese branch subdividing itself into many sub-groups as (a) the Bodo sub-group containing a host of dialects as the Garo, Rabha, Chutiya, Koch, Kachari (Bodo), Dimasa and Lahung and Makli also; (b). The Naga sub-group comprising Ao, Lota etc. and (c) the Kuki-Chin sub-group including the old and new Kuki speeches and Manipuri. Of these, the Bodo sub-group is by far the

Introduction To Assam

most important and most of the river names of upper Assam beginning with *di* (Water) belong to this source. The Tai-Chinese sub-family divides itself into two branches viz. (1) the Khamti and (2) the Shan including Phakial and Altonia. The influence of this Tai (Ahom) sub-group is comparatively much less on Assamese than the Bodo sub-group.

Assamese, An Island Of Indo-Aryan Speech

"By origin an Indo-Aryan vernacular Assamese is surrounded on all sides by non-Aryan speeches. It may even be said that Assamese is a small island in a sea of diverse non-Aryan languages, and as such Assamese may be regarded as being more open to non-Aryan influences than other N. I. A. vernacular. But, the extent of non-Aryan influences does not appear to be as great as it might have been expected to be". (Dr. Bani Kanta Kakati's *Assamese, It's Formation and Development*, p. 357).

(I) Austro-Asiatic (a) Khasi Element

"The Assam Valley districts are surrounded on all side by aboriginal tribes mostly of Tibeto-Burman origin except the Khasis who belong to the Mon-khmer branch of the Austric stock. The Austro-Asiatic people are supposed by some to have been the earliest inhabitants of Northern India and driven to their present mountain homes by the Tibeto-Burman on the east and by the Dravidian on the west. The Khasi language in Assam is the sole representative of the Austro-Asiatic family in North Eastern India. Though, the Khasis have been living an isolated life cut off from and great direct intercourse with the plains, there have been in all periods of history commercial and political dealings with them and from the linguistic point of view there have been mutual borrowings on both sides.....

Introduction To Assam

(a) Kol (b) (Munda) Element

"Considering the present habitation of the Kols (Kherwari) in the Chota Nagpur Plateau and Central Provinces, a direct Kolarian influence upon Assamese seems to be a far cry. Dr. S. Lee refers to the Vayu Purana which shows the Kol in its list of the peoples of Eastern India between the Pragjyotisha (modern Gauhati) and Videha (Tirhut). There are references also to the Mahabharata which show the Kol as a tribe living in Eastern India (P. A. P. D., pp. 87, 88.) It is in the regions north of the Ganges and east of Bihar that the Assamese language in its formative period seems to have been individualised. A direct Kol influence thus becomes easily conceivable.....

(c) Malayan Element

"For want of a comprehensive racial name designation the Austric speakers of the Malay Peninsula, the contributions made by their speeches are tentatively called the Malay element. The N. I. A. Assamese seems to have been foisted upon an Austric speaking people, and while the grammatical structure of the language remained substantially Aryan, the non-Aryan languages made inroads into the speech in several directions. The vocables that are regarded as indigenous in present day Assamese seem to have been most taken over from the Austric speakers.....

II. Tibeto-Burman Bodo Element

"Amongst the Tibeto-Burman people the Bodos were the most powerful. They built up strong kingdoms and with varying times and under various tribal names—the Chutiyas, the Kachar, the Koches etc. they held sway over one or another part of north eastern India during different historical times..... They are a people who lived mostly in the plains and

Introduction To Assam

came in almost daily contact with the Aryanised people. It is natural to expect that they should make some contribution to the vocables of the people with whom they lived in close neighbourhood.....

III. Tai Ahom Element

"The Ahoms..... though they constituted a ruling race for about six hundred years (1228-1824 A.D.) they gave up their language and religion in favour of Aryan habits and customs and their absorption was so complete that they contributed only few words to Assamese vocabulary". (Ibid, pp. 32-51).

Copious Bodo Names In Assamese

"The wide extent and long duration of Bodo dominion is shown by the frequent occurrence of the prefix *li* or *ti*, the Bodo word for water, in the river names of the Brahmaputra valley and the adjoining country to the west e.g. Dibru, Dikhu, Dihing, Dihong, Dibong, Disang, Diphang, Dimla, etc. In some cases the old name is disappearing. The Dichu river, for instance, it is now better known as Jaldhaka, while in others it has already gone, as in the case of the Brahmaputra which in the early days of the Ahom rule was known as the Ti-Rao. The latter word was doubtless the origin of another old name for the river, viz. Lohit or Lau-hitya (red)..... "Thus the Kosi derives its name from Khussi, the Newar word for river, but it is connected in Hindu legend with Kusik Raja; and the Tista, though its first syllable is clearly the Bodo 'di' or 'ti', it is regarded by the Hindus as a corruption of *trishna*, "thirst", or *trisrota*, "three springs."

Few Marks On The Toponymy By The Ahoms

"The Ahoms ruled in Assam for six hundred years, but their word for river (*nam*) occurs only in a few

Introduction To Assam

instance in the extreme east e.g. Namrup, Namtsik and Namsang. They called the Dikhu, the Namchau, the earlier Kachari name has survived in spite of them. The Ahoms of course were relatively few in number, but they were—the dominant race; and the fact that they compared with the Bodo tribes, have left so few marks on the toponymy of the country may perhaps be taken to show that the period for which the latter were supreme was far longer than that for which the Ahoms are known to have ruled. (Gait's History of Assam, pp. 617).

No Surety Of Origin Of Non Aryan Words

In showing Austro-Asiatic influence over Assamese the author of 'Assamese Its Formation and Development' admits: "In selecting non-Aryan words for comparison with Assamese words of unknown origin in the following lists the only guiding principle has been similarity in sound and meaning (which of course, is not a sure guide in etymology). Nothing more than mere comparison is, therefore, suggested and every remark about non-Aryan affiliation is to be regarded as subject to this reservation in statement." (p. 32).

Khasi Vocabules

Austro-Asiatic Khasi element is suggested in such words as *Kabau* (supplication); *kingkhap* (a kind of cloth); *khang* (anger); *dong* (channel); *hero* (so they say); *Japa* (a bamboo clothes basket); *jaha* (a kind of rice); *methon* (a wild bull) *enei* (for nothing); *chokora* (a shell of an egg etc.); *nodoka* (fleshy); *tokona* (wretchedly poor) etc.

Santali Correspondences

Austro-Asiatic Kolarian (Munda) element:—(b) Santali correspondences are: *alabadu* (worthless);

Introduction To Assam

bhoda (foolish); *bhut-kura* (dwarfish); *boka* (mud); *chafal* (vigorous); *dhtp* (boundary mark); *dhop* (a ball of cloth); *dodhormor* (dilemma); *ghut-mut* (dwarfish); *gohari* (petition); *jugut* (ready); *lenga* (tall, long); *gongora* (cross-tempered) etc.

Mundari Words

Austro-Asiatic Kolarian or Munda element is suggested in the following "Kolarian-Assamese correspondences" to show either the nearness of contact of both the languages, or the extent to which they were indebted to common sources". (a) The Mundari correspondence: *atom-tokari* (within limit); *danguwa* (bachelor); *huta* (hard); *latum* (a spinning top); *chikara* (a stick); *sota* (a broom-stick); *thetuwai* (numbness, cold) *maiki* (a female); *muga* (silk cocoon); *sereka* (watery).

Malayan Comparisons

The Malayan element is suggested by such correspondences as: *achu-suta* (coloured threads); *baga* (white); *bilak* (many); *batalu-guti* (a clay pellet); *buti* (bhent); *chenga* (burning); *checha* (cold); *da'l* (shrine); *dingi* (neck); *gilak* (many); *hola* (pool); *bul* (thorn); *holonga* (sharp pointed bamboo); *kodo* (hornet); *konga* (having crooked fingers); *kilakuti* (elbow); *kelehna* (crooked); *mecha* (curved); *maldam* (aburial mound); *taleka* (large eyed); *takon* (a stick); *tla* (a mound) *topola* (a bundle); *ui* (white ant) etc.

Bodo Verbroots

Tibeto-Burman Bodo element appears in such verbal roots as *chelak* (lick); *fira* (refresh); *rep* (out with a drawing stroke); *agaoh* (obstruct); *gachak* (trample); *chekur* (run at full speed); *bhekur* (get)

Introduction To Assam

(mouldy); *bakhalia* (peel of the skin etc); *gora* (season under mud); *chep* (squeeze); *gaba* (clasp); *bir* (to part as hair); *thalamuri* (slap on head) etc.

Bodo Words

Words of suspected Bodo origin are such as *haphalu* (a mound); *mathan* (rice-plate with pedestal); *habang* (silly); *hamahl* (procrastination); *jakhala* a ladder); *jong* (a point); *langi* (fishing net); *hoja* (simpleton); *hangar* (fencing); *bonda* (male cat); *khoka* (fish-trap); *hao-fao* (lungs); *chang* (a scaffold); *dokhar* (piece); *lapha* (a vegetable plant); *lao-khola* (skull); *silkha* (myrobalam) etc.

Words Of Tai Origin

Such are the words of Tai origin:—*pokha* (sprout); *pung* (spring); *phang* (trick); *pheta* (bent); *buranji* (history); *join* (shallow canal); *jeka* (damp); *jtn* (quiet); *jenga* (troubles); *thonga* (bag); *kareng* (a palace); *hai* (noise); *donga* (a puddle); *angmara* (impotent) etc. "The non-Aryan languages borrowed so freely from Assamese that it is often difficult to fix upon a particular word as of non-Aryan origin without ascertaining whether such formation occur in other cognate non-Aryan languages". (A. F. D., Introduction p. 53).

Alpines In Eastern India

Another word may be said in connexion with the Assamese Bengali relation. In a learned article in *Indian Culture*, (Vol. II. No. 1) Late R. B. K. L. Baruwa, C.I.E. attempts to show that what we have so far called the pre-Vedic or non-Vedic Aryans were really the Alpines whom he prefers to style rather as Early Aryans. He bases his conclusions on the observations of two distinguished scholars,

Introduction To Assam

Dr. J. H. Hutton (Census of India, 1931, Vol. I pt. 1. Report) and Dr. B. S. Guha (Ibid, Vol. I. pt. III Ethnographical). We shall quote the relevant portions of the said article of late R. B. Barua to show what constituted the early culture of Eastern India and what now differentiates its provincial dialects e.g. Bengali and Assamese, today.

Mediterranean or Early Aryans and the Kalitas

"The proto-Australoids were superseded in India long ages ago by a short-statured dolichocephalic strain with high cranial vault and medium lips. Dr. Hutton has given the name Mediterranean to this race. Dr. Guha, however, admits that this race and the Vedic Aryans of a much later period may have been evolved out of a common ancestral stock but were differentiated very early. It seems to me, therefore, that a name like the early Aryans may be properly applied to them instead of the term Mediterranean. Dr. Guha finds that the Pods of Bengal, the Telegu Brahmans, the Oriya Brahmans, the Kanarese Brahmans, the Saraswat Brahmans, the Chitpavan Brahmans and the Desastha Brahmans are basically of this race. Though, the recent anthropometric measurements were not extended to Assam, Dr. Hutton thinks that the Kalitas of Assam, a high caste, also belong probably to this stock which "appears to have contributed most to the physical composition of the peoples of India and perhaps to their culture". The civilisation disclosed in the Indus Valley is generally attributed to this race.

Western And Eastern Alpine And The 'Outer Band' Languages

During, the third millenium B.C. an Alpine immigration into India took place. It is believed that these Alpines, who were brachycephals with leptorrhine

Introduction To Assam

noses, had before their entry into India, lived in or near the Iranian table-land, where they had met at least the Iranian Aryans, if not the common ancestors of both the Vedic and the Avestic Aryans and had acquired an Aryan language of the Dardic or Pisachi type. One branch of this race pushed towards the western coast of India through the Indus Valley for at least one Alpine skull has been found at Mohenjo-daro. The other branch moved towards Eastern India without, it seems, staying long in the central part of Northern India to be found in Eastern India as well as the western coast. They, also gave rise to Grierson's 'outer band' of the Indo-Aryan languages. The languages of this 'outer band' in Eastern India, at the present day are Bihari, Bengali, Assamese and Oriya.

Vedic Aryan Physiognomy Not Found In E.I.

"During, the second millennium B.C. the Vedic Aryans entered India through Afghanistan. They introduced the vedic religion and culture and the vedic Sanskrit, but in a pure form they can be found only in the North-west Himalayan tribes like the Kaffirs and Pathans and among the Sikhs of the Punjab and the U. P. Brahmans. Vedic Aryan physiognomy of the nordic type is not to be seen anywhere in Eastern India or the western coast.....

Languages Of The 'Outer Band' In W.I.

"It appears that the Austric languages once covered the whole of northern India and that subsequently, the Dravidian language entered India and practically supplanted the Austric. The few patches of Austric language still remaining in parts of the Himalayan region, the Khasi Hills of Assam, and Chota Nagpur are the only remnants of this ancient speech. The Dravidian was the prevailing speech throughout northern In-

Introduction To Assam

dia, when the Indo-European, imported by the Alpines, arrived. As already stated, this was a language of the Dardic type a descendant of which is still to be found in Khowari, the speech of the Khos of Chitral who are definitely Alpine in physical characteristics and who evidently mark the route taken by the Alpines for their entry into India through the Pamirs. Kashmiri and Kohisthani are also languages of this stock like all the other languages of the 'outer band'.

Vedic Sanskrit Modified In C.I.

"When the Rig Vedic Aryans came into the Punjab and the Madhyadesa, they no doubt found the Dravidian speech there practically unmodified by the Alpine immigrants who had preceded them. In course of time, Vedic Sanskrit acquired Dravidian characteristics, such as the cerebrals, which are still absent not only from the European languages of the Aryan family, but, also from the languages of the old Iranian and the Dardic groups. When, at a much later period, Vedic Sanskrit reached both Eastern India and western coast, the original Pisachi languages of these tracts were more or less Sanskritized.

Great Overlay Of Sanskrit On Bengali Etc.

"In the case of some of these vernaculars like Gujarati, Eastern Hindi and Bengali the overlay of Sanskrit has been so great that it is now difficult to trace their ancient Pisachi origin. Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji has thus been led to trace the origin of the Bengali languages to Vedic Sanskrit through Magadhi Prakrit, rejecting Dr. Grierson's classification of the Indo-Aryan languages into inner and outer bands, and the entire evidence adduced by the anthropologists based not only on cephalic indices but also on other somatic characters and blood-groups. Having rejected

Introduction To Assam

these scientific data he has been forced to postulate two sets of Aryans entering India, Vedic and non-Vedic, the latter preceding the former and occupying Eastern India before the advent of the Vedic Aryans by whom they were designated as Vratyas. It is hardly necessary to add that this theory, which is only an adaptation of Dr. Hoernle's speculation of a second Aryan intrusion through the Himalayas is now discredited. Rai Bahadur Ramaprasad Chanda's theory of a tribe of the Homo-Alpines entering India and pushing towards the east giving rise to the Pisachi languages of Eastern India and non-Mongoloid brachycephaly particularly in Bengal, has now been accepted by all competent scholars who have correctly postulated an earlier date for this invasion.

Overlay Of Sanskrit Less On Assamese Etc.,

"The overlay of Sanskrit has not been to the same extent on all the languages of the outerband. Take, for instance, Assamese..... The cerebrals are still absent from this language, though present in Bengali. Further, the pronunciation of X in Assamese like 'ch' in German Loch and as in Khowari, Pustho and other Pisachi dialects of the Dardic family is a remarkable phenomenon. Grierson, noticing the affinity between the Assamese and Kashmiri, has remarked that it is curious coincidence of the extreme east meeting the extreme west. There are words in Assamese which are still used in the same sense as in some of the Pisachi languages. The Assam means a clan or group. It is to be found in Afridi 'khel' 'Jakka khel' and so forth where the word 'khel' has the same meaning..... Take for instance, the word 'ubh' meaning 'to stand'. It is still used in Assamese, Sylheti, Marathi and Sindhi. It was used in the old Bengali Charyapadas of perhaps the eleventh

Introduction To Assam

century A.D. but, is now out of use. The Assamese words 'Ai' (mother), 'Bai' (sister) are to be found in Kohisthani and the languages of the Western coast, but no longer in Bengali. The Diari 'of the Sindhi dialect, meaning, 'female offspring' has become the 'Jlari' in Assamese where the 'd' is softened into 'j'. In Assamese the word 'Baru' means "all right". In Gujarati the word is 'Varu' used in the same sense. It has ceased to be used in Bengali.

Assamese Words Through Pisachi And European Aryan Languages

"I have given some instances of very common homely words, but such instances can be multiplied. The derivation of Assamese from a Pisachi origin rather than from Vedic Sanskrit is proved further by the occurrence therein of words and expressions found in European Aryan languages, but long lost in Sanskrit. Take for instance, the common Assamese word 'Batar'? (?Vatar) which has the same meaning and derivation as German 'wether' and English 'weather'. The Assamese word 'Boga' (white) has its counterpart in Slavonic 'Bogu'. The Assamese word 'Selak' (lick) is equivalent etc. Icelandic 'sleikja' and English 'lick' The sister languages Bihari and Bengali have been so much Sanskritized that it is now difficult to trace their true origin." (Pp. 161-65).

The Vratyas Or Alpines And Their Kingdoms In E.I.

"The traditional literature depicts the countries of Eastern India as Anupadesa or Vratya land.... The Vratyas were no other than the Alpines who possessed a fairer complexion, a prominent nose and above all spoke an Aryan language, though of the Pisachi variety. These characteristics clearly distinguished them from the Australoids, or even the Mediterraneans

Introduction To Assam

who were not Aryan in speech. Further, these Vratyas (Alpines) may have had proto-Nordic military leaders as supposed by Hutton and others. They had large and prosperous kingdoms in the east such as Magadha, Videha, Kosala and Pragjyotisha. They were in fact as much cultured as the Aryans themselves and their culture resembled the Vedic Aryan culture more than that of the Mediterraneans..... (pp. 166-67).

Jarasandha, Janak, Bhagadatta All Vratya (Alpine)

"The affinity of the Alpines with the Iranian Aryans, in certain respects, were nevertheless noticed and hence perhaps Vratya monarchs like Jarasandha of Magadha and Bhagadatta of Pragjyotisha were dubbed as Asuras, as Asura was the God of the Iranians. Afterwards, however, they and their descendants were looked upon as good Aryans and for Bhagadatta of Pragjyotisha a descent from Vishnu himself was latterly invented. One important historical fact, which we find from the Puranas, is that Narakasur, the father of Bhagadatta, is said to have conquered Pragjotisha from the Mongolian king with the help of the king of Videha another Vratya monarch. This Mongolian dynasty was undoubtedly of Tibeto-Burman origin as the king subdued by Narakasur and his soldiers had yellow or gold complexion and were addicted to meat and drink" . . . (p. 167).

Bhaskar Varman Actually Brahman By Cast Like Nagar Brahmins


"One of the Padavis of the Gujarati Nagar Brahmins was Varma. Prachya Vidyarnava Nagendra Nath Basu is, therefore, led to suppose that, perhaps, the king of the dynasty to which Bhaskar Varman belonged were also such Brahmins (Social History of Kamarupa, Vol. 111). The surmise is strengthened by the

Introduction To Assam

fact that the Chinese, Scholar Yuan Chawang has left on record that Bhaskar Varman was a Brahman by cast and Yuan Chwang was a very close observer of man and things. The details of his account have been taken as accurate by all scholars. It is on record also that he spent more than a month in the capital of Kamarupa and from there, together with Bhaskar Varman, he proceeded to meet Sri Harsha at Raj Mahal. He had therefore, full opportunity to know the true caste of Bhaskar Varman." (p. 169).

Vratya Contribution To The Upanishad Culture

"The Aryan-cum-Mediterranean culture of the Punjab and Madhyadesa met the Alpine-cum-Mediterranean culture of Eastern India in Bihar and the result was a synthesis. As remarked by Mr. Nagendranath Ghose, this synthetic product was Neo-Aryanism. The important feature of which was the metaphysical theosophy of the Upanishads. Aryan Brahmins learnt this theosophy from Vratya kings like Janak of Videha in whose court was assembled a galaxy of metaphysicians with the famous Jajnavalkya at the head. Thenceforward the centre of India culture shifted to Eastern India. Two or three centuries after Janaka, Eastern India produced two great ruler religious thinkers Budha and Mahavira," (pp. 70).



Printed by A. P. Sata at the States' People Press
Medows Street, Fort, Bombay, and Published by M. K. Vora
for Vora and Co., Publishers Ltd., 5 Round Building, Bombay 2.





CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL LIBRARY,
NEW DELHI

Issue Record

Catalogue No. 954.11/Neo-34806

Author— Neog, D.
Introduction to
Assam

Title— Introduction to
Assam

Borrower No.

Date of Issue

Date of Return

"A book that is shut is but a block"

CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL LIBRARY
GOVT. OF INDIA
Department of Archaeology
NEW DELHI.

Please help us to keep the book
clean and moving.